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In his dramatic workshop, Professor Eastman examined almost three hundred religious plays and pageants to find the best for inclusion in this collection. Eleven one-act plays and two pageants survived his rigid tests.

He demanded that the characters be real, true to life, not just "types," and that their dialogue be as convincing as natural speech. The plot, too, must reflect accurately the movement of the lives of the characters. Then, beyond these requirements of all good plays, there must be that indefinable something which makes a play "religious," a power to touch emotional springs to action while widening sympathy and deepening understanding.

The plays finally chosen are almost sure to stand for some time as leaders of their class. All are of the sort that can be presented by amateur actors, with home-made equipment, in the average church or school.

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MODERN RELIGIOUS DRAMAS

COMPILED AND EDITED BY
FRED EASTMAN
PROFESSOR OF RELIGIOUS LITERATURE AND DRAMA
IN THE CHICAGO THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

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ABOUT ROYALTIES

"Our church wishes to produce a good religious drama. Won't you suggest one—especially one which requires no payment of royalty for production?"

How often the request has come! Suppose, however, it were slightly altered: "Our church wishes to give a dinner. Won't you suggest a shop where we can get meat and vegetables without paying for them?" The answer would be obvious.

Now it costs labor, time, and money to write and print plays just as surely as it does to produce meat and vegetables. Practically the only financial compensation the authors and publishers of plays receive is through the payment of royalties for production rights. It is a matter of justice and ethics, as well as of law, therefore, that the small royalties asked for the privilege of producing these plays be paid promptly and in accordance with the special arrangements noted in each instance.

Once the churches understand this fact the requests for plays without royalty will cease, for the Church above all organizations believes and teaches that the laborer is worthy of his hire.

PRINTED IN THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

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ACKNOWLEDGMENT

This collection would never have been possible without the sympathetic coöperation of the publishers and authors of the various plays included. Grateful acknowledgment therefore goes to The Viking Press for the privilege of using "The Neighbours," by Zona Gale; to Percival Wilde for his "Confessional"; to Virginia Church for her dramatization of Tolstoi's "What Men Live By"; to Longmans, Green and Company for "The Valiant," by Holworthy Hall and Robert Middlemass; to Samuel French for Fred Eastman's "Bread" and "America's Unfinished Battles" and for "El Cristo," by Margaret Larkin; to the Walter H. Baker Company for "The Deathless World," by J. M. S. Tompkins; to The Stage Guild for "Dust of the Road," by Kenneth Sawyer Goodman; to the Missionary Education Movement for "The Color Line," by Irene Taylor MacNair; to Corona Rayle Cook for her "The Golden Rule in Courtship"; to Charles S. Brown for his "Modern Magi"; and to the Abingdon Press for "The Christmas Pageant of the Holy Grail," by W. R. Bowie.

INTRODUCTION

A religious drama is one which has a religious effect upon an audience. That is, it sends the audience away exalted in spirit, deepened in its sense of fellowship with God and man, and enriched in its understanding of the spiritual forces which struggle in men's souls.

More than two hundred modern plays and pageants were considered for this volume. To each the following standards or tests were applied:

Is the play interesting?
Will it have a religious effect upon an audience?
Do the characters have the breath of life in them?
Does the play have an adequate plot involving strong situation, conflict, suspense, choice, climax, and satisfactory solution?
Does it succeed in reaching the emotions?
Is the dialogue natural?
Does the play come within the limitations of the average church's equipment and cast?
Will it have a religious value for the actors, increasing their appreciation of character, situation, and background?
Will its total effect point out or mirror the truths of life?

The eleven plays and two pageants in this volume have come through these tests.

To those already using dramas in church work, the paragraphs above will constitute all the introduction this volume needs. But there may be some who still wonder why the churches have turned to this artistic form. Why, they ask, should a church produce dramas at all? To such persons a bit of history and explanation may be in place here.

Picture an audience of 20,000 sitting for six days in an open air theatre witnessing with intense interest the presentation of from

twenty to thirty dramas—and you picture the greatest project in adult religious education which the world has yet seen. The Greeks produced that project and it was so successful that they maintained it for nearly five hundred years. It was not a private or commercial project, but one developed by the state as a means of cultivating the spiritual and æsthetic life of its citizens. The state counted this project so important that during the dramatic productions all business was abandoned, law courts closed, and prisoners released from jail. Attendance was not compulsory, but the interest of the people was so keen that more than half the entire population of Athens turned out to see the plays.

From first to last these dramas were not regarded as entertainment, but as a distinctly educational and religious venture. As education they took the place of newspapers, books, and magazines, and the tragic poets were looked upon as the teachers of the people. As religion they served as an act of homage to the god Dionysus. They were given in the sacred places and at the sacred season of the year. The poets who wrote the plays and the actors who played them were regarded as ministers of religion and their persons were held inviolable. The theatre itself possessed the sanctity of a temple and the chief seats in it were reserved for the priests.

The success of this project in adult education may be measured from the fact that it not only brought forth some of the world's greatest poets, but it developed the æsthetic and imaginative life of the people of Athens to such an extent that to this day their name is the symbol of culture. In the course of a few centuries Athens with a population of 30,000 gave to the world more great poets and artists than America has yet produced out of a population of 115,000,000.

In the Middle Ages, religion and drama both had a rebirth in England. And they occupied the same cradle. The priests wanted to tell the gospel story to the people. The language of the Church was Latin, and but few laymen understood it. So the priests began to dramatize it. They created Passion plays, dealing with the life of Christ, and acted them in pantomime in the church itself. Immediately the people began to understand. They wanted more.

Miracle and mystery plays quickly followed. Then guilds of laymen were formed to act the plays on platforms outside the church. The actors put the platforms on wheels, and rolled them out into the provinces and acted the plays for the benefit of those who had no opportunities to attend the greater churches of the cities.

But now the drama began to move away from the church and away from a sense of mission to the human spirit. It degenerated into a show business, and then into a puppet show. It never became great until Shakespeare and his contemporaries came along with their vision of the struggling souls of men, and lifted it again to a plane of influence and power in human affairs. It was Shakespeare who put into Hamlet's mouth that phrase, "the play's the thing," which is usually quoted entirely removed from its context. The full sentence is:

> The play's the thing
> Wherein I'll catch the conscience of the king.

The best dramas have always done just that! They have caught the conscience of the king—and of his people as well.

To-day, as in ancient Greece and medieval England, we whose chief interest in life is religion—and especially a religion of power which challenges men's consciences, and brings aid to them in their spiritual struggles—are turning quite naturally to drama. For the essence of drama is struggle. The deepest struggles of our lives are religious. The drama, more than any other art, deals with the emotional and spiritual struggles of life, and the clash of human wills. It is not a matter of chance or fad, but a course of action deep rooted in historical precedent, that in a day of revived emphasis in our religion upon the challenge to the will to right wrongs, to take up the cross of Jesus and live life dangerously, we enlist the art of drama to catch the conscience of our people.

Moreover, we have an even greater need for developing the æsthetic, creative, and imaginative life. The increasing mechanization and institutionalism of human life has left the creative impulses in us unsatisfied. We feel that we are more and more coming to be

cogs in a great machine, a machine that is liable to grind us to powder in any moment of great strain. We want to be saved from this machine-life. We want to be saved from the gods of standardization that are trying to make us all conform to type—to think and believe and act alike. The very preservation of sanity and emotional poise demands that the creative impulses and the thwarted emotions within us be trained and directed toward useful ends instead of being allowed to burn themselves out in suppressed protest and rebellion. The drama is as potent to meet this need as it was 2,000 years ago. Dean Inge, discussing the new prophet which this generation needs, has said: "When this new prophet comes, I am disposed to think that he will choose to speak to his generation neither from the pulpit nor from the platform, nor from the printed page, but from the stage. A great dramatist might help us find our souls."

The churches which have tried the art of drama as a ministry to the human spirit have had an interesting experience. At first they felt that a religious ministry must draw its materials from the Bible, and so the first religious plays were practically all on Biblical subjects. Now many of the most dramatic situations in the Bible are anything but religious. Take the book of Esther for example—a little book of five thousand words in which the name of God is not mentioned. It contains a highly melodramatic story of a Jewish girl who was loyal to her race, and of the ultimate triumph of Esther, the girl. Beyond the loyalty of Esther to her race there is nothing in the story that can be counted as religious and even that may be called in question in a day when we stress loyalty to the Kingdom of God above loyalty to any one race. Or take the story of Jephtha's daughter. It is the dramatic tale of a prostitute's son who won certain victories for the Jews against their enemies and then had to pay the Lord his vow which he made just before the battle. The vow was to the effect that if the Lord gave him victory he would sacrifice to the Lord the first living thing he met on his return to his home. He met first his only daughter. The elders in Israel required him to fulfill his vow and make the human sacrifice. What possible religious value in that? Its only value is that it shows some-

thing of the primitive conceptions of God of those times. It would be powerful for good only if presented along with another play such as one built upon the story of the Prodigal Son, showing the contrast between Jesus' teaching and the older one.

Gradually the churches are coming to see that a religious play is one that has a religious effect upon an audience. The materials may be drawn from the Bible or from our own struggles. If the effect upon the audience is not to shed light on some spiritual struggle common to that audience the play is not religious though written in theological vocabulary and acted in a temple and presented by ministers of the gospel. But if it does have a religious effect upon the audience—if it stirs the emotions, exalts the spirit, sheds light upon the difficult way of life, and draws people together in closer fellowship, and all the while is interesting—then it is a religious play. About ninety per cent of the plays now classified as religious will not meet this test. Most of them are pious trash. Others are propaganda for various boards and agencies. But a few have been tested many times and found worthy. Some of these—the better Biblical ones—have been collected, along with other kinds, in the two volumes [1] prepared by the Committee on Religious Drama of the Federal Council of Churches. Two other volumes of religious plays worthy of mention are those by Phillips E. Osgood, "Old Time Church Drama Adapted" and "The Sinner Beloved." [2] *The present collection, however, is the only one exclusively devoted to modern plays of spiritual power.*

Another bit of church experience may be interesting. Most of them began by attempting three-act plays which were really too difficult for their skill. They have come to see that it is better to present a one-act play well than a three-act play inadequately. And so they are demanding more and more of the short plays that can be used as one part of a religious service or an evening's program. That is why this collection confines itself to one-act plays.

We have a long way to go before we can hope for any such results as the Greeks obtained. But we are on the way. Our greatest im-

[1] The Century Company, New York. Vol. I, 1924, $2.00. Vol. II, 1926, $3.00.
[2] Harper and Brothers, New York, 1928, $1.75 each.

mediate need is for more good plays—plays that can be acted by amateurs and still have a religious effect upon an audience. Next we need trained leaders and directors. Various summer schools and a few courses in colleges and seminaries are developing these. Finally we need more satisfactory equipment in churches for the presentation of dramas. Every new church that hopes to keep abreast of the times will see that it is equipped with adequate stage, lighting facilities, draperies, curtains—and last, but not least, ventilation.

In these paragraphs we have considered the use of drama only with regard to its effect upon an audience. The greatest value, however, comes to the actors. For if they learn to really live their parts they give themselves a discipline of putting themselves in others' places and looking at life through others' eyes. In that practice they develop their own understanding and sympathy. They deepen their insight into the motives and purposes and difficulties of others. A few weeks ago a woman came into the editor's study and said, "I am glad I have had this training in drama; it has helped me to better understand my neighbors and the others with whom I rub elbows every day."

This, then, is why the churches are using drama. It is *not* a new wrinkle in religious education or a means of making Bible stories interesting to children. *It is a deliberate attempt to develop strength, beauty, and power in the imaginative and creative life of the players and the audience.* It is no fad; its roots go down to the beginnings of both religion and drama. Its immediate warrant lies in the need of our times for a spiritual ministry to the æsthetic and emotional life of our people. Its fruit is in human lives enriched in understanding, sympathy, and fellowship.

FRED EASTMAN.

Chicago Theological Seminary,
June, 1928.

THE NEIGHBOURS *

BY

ZONA GALE

* Copyright, 1914, by B. W. Huebsch. First printed in "Wisconsin Plays: First Series," 1914. Reprinted separately and obtainable at 50 cents per copy from the publishers, The Viking Press, 30 Irving Place, New York City.

"The Neighbours" may be performed under the following conditions:

The royalty on "The Neighbours" is ten dollars for every performance for which an admission fee is asked; or five dollars when admission is free.

Rural Royalty.—For rural communities the offer is made to permit the play to be given without royalty on condition that some group or person plant in the community a roadside fruit tree and keep it alive; or else contribute in some definite way to community consciousness and community development.

The royalty is payable to either the publisher or the author.

CHARACTERS

Grandma
Mis' Diantha Abel
Ezra Williams
Peter
Inez
Mis' Elmira Moran
Mis' Trot
Mis' Carry Ellsworth

THE NEIGHBOURS

A kitchen. At the right an ironing-board, with full clothes-basket on the floor. At the back an open door, an open window with blooming plants on its outside sill, and a wide cupboard with a figured calico curtain before it. At the left an exit into a shed. A wooden-bottomed rocker with high back and calico cushion, some wooden-bottomed straight chairs, a table covered with a red cloth and ranged with four or five lamps, and at the corner farthest from the ironing-board, clothes-bars spread with a few freshly-ironed pieces.

By the window, left back, sits GRANDMA *who does not leave her chair throughout the play until its end. She is very old. She is in bright-coloured calico, with ribbons on her black cap. She is cutting and winding white and black carpet rags, and a basket of the balls is beside her on the floor.*

MIS' DIANTHA ABEL *is ironing at the board. She has on a blue calico gown, a long gingham apron, spectacles, and a black hat trimmed with faded flowers and a dilapidated ostrich feather. She irons slowly, as anybody would iron, tests her flatiron, starts for the shed to renew it at the stove out there.*

GRANDMA (*looking up*): Seems to me Inez is a terrible long time gettin' that starch.

MIS' ABEL: I wish she'd hurry herself back. I ain't got enough starch to do the collars.

GRANDMA: I'll cold-starch 'em for you, if you want.

MIS' ABEL: No, Grandma, you jest set still and take care o' yourself. Don't you go botherin' about other folks's work.

GRANDMA: I'm terrible tired cutting up carpet rags. (MIS' ABEL *disappears in the shed.* GRANDMA, *sorting her rags, talks on,*

raising her voice to follow MIS' ABEL.) 'Tain't as though they was goin' to be rugs. We got rag rugs all over the house now. So has everybody else we know. Everybody's floors is plastered with 'em. I been cuttin' rags ever since I came an' doin' nothin' . . . (MIS' ABEL *returns with her fresh iron, testing it as she comes*) . . . *but* cuttin' rags. Seems like I'd ought to be able to make somethin' else with my fingers. Somethin' human. Where you goin', Dianthy?

MIS' ABEL: I'm a-goin' to get this ironin' out of the way, short off. That is, I am if Inez ever gets back from Mis' Ellsworth's with that cup o' starch.

GRANDMA: What you got your hat on for?

MIS' ABEL: So's if anybody runs in they won't set half the day, henderin' me. They'll think I'm goin' off.

GRANDMA: I know. The neighbours do hender terrible. (*A pause.*) Sometimes, though, I think it must be kind o' nice to have somethin' to be hendered *at*.

MIS' ABEL (*ironing—but not fast*): I always say mornin's is wove and cut out for hard work. I don't want Mis' Moran or somebody comin' in an' settin' the whole forenoon. This ironin's got to be got out of the way this mornin', no matter what happens to who.

(*Her iron sticks, and she rubs it vigorously on the carpet.*)

GRANDMA (*who has dropped her work and is reaching to pick dead leaves off the plants in the window*): I don't seem to have no go in me no more. I don't know what's come over me. I ain't no more interested in them carpet rags than I am in the dipthery.

(EZRA WILLIAMS *appears at the open window. He is large and flushed and furious.*)

EZRA: Mis' Abel! *Mis' Abel!*

MIS' ABEL (*looks at him, then turns and goes on ironing*): Well, Ezra, as a family, we ain't deef.

EZRA: Is this you folks's wood out here?

MIS' ABEL (*over shoulder*): Wood?

EZRA: I want to know if you folks ordered any cord wood?

MIS' ABEL: No. We didn't order no wood.

EZRA: Well, they've brought you some. Only they've unpiled it in front of my door on the piece that's new-seeded and that I've tended like a baby.

MIS' ABEL: Ezra, you're that reasonable that I s'pose it's reasonin' that keeps you so calm. That wood never heard of us.

EZRA: You sure?

MIS' ABEL: Not as sure as you are about things. You don't often find folks as sure as that. But—sure.

EZRA: Well, it's somebody's fool wood, an' I've got to go an' find the fool that ordered it up—— (*He strides off, still talking.*) Whoever heard o' anybody gettin' cord wood in, anyhow, in the middle o' the summer?

(GRANDMA, *who has stopped picking off dead leaves and has listened attentively during his stay, looks after him till he disappears; then she turns.*)

GRANDMA: What did he say?

MIS' ABEL: Did he talk too soft for you, Grandma?

GRANDMA: He was so mad I couldn't keep my mind on what he *was* saying.

MIS' ABEL: Oh, well, he was just talkin' to hear himself talk. About some cord wood.

GRANDMA: It don't seem as if anybody *could* be so interested in cord wood.

MIS' ABEL: They ain't nothin' in the world for Ezra but just Ezra. Nothin' in the world for him but just—him.

GRANDMA (*looking off*): Don't you s'pose there is? It don't seem like they's enough to *any*body to occupy 'em the whole time.

(*Up to the open door comes* PETER. *He is tall, awkward, grave; long, uncovered wrists, heavy, falling hands; but he has an occasional wide, pleasant, shy smile.*)

PETER (*on the porch*): Good morning, Mis' Abel.

MIS' ABEL: Oh, good morning, Peter. I just happen to be ironin' a flat-piece, so I don't have to put my mind on it. I'm goin' to do the collars next (*pointedly*), and they take thought. What's wanted?

PETER (*shuffling, turning his hat*): Any groceries this morning, Mis' Abel?

MIS' ABEL: Groceries?

PETER (*nods and enters*): I've started takin' orders for Ferguson.

MIS' ABEL: Well, I'm glad to hear that. When do you start?

PETER: To-day.

MIS' ABEL: Does many order to the door?

PETER: I dunno. I've just started. I'm just startin'. Now.

MIS' ABEL (*rubbing her iron on the carpet*): I ain't doin' no orderin' to-day. We've got to eat up what we've got. Unless you want to bring me fif' cents worth o' granulated sugar. You might do that. Get up there and get me that basket of odds an' ends on the top of the cupboard. Seems to me I see a piece o' beeswax up there.

PETER (*finishes writing down the order for sugar and brings a chair from near* GRANDMA'S *chair*): I thought I'd just stop in an' see. You don't think she—(*he stumbles over the chair he is carrying*)—she wouldn't want anything this morning, would she, Mis' Abel?

MIS' ABEL: Who's she? Who you talking about?

PETER: Why, Inez.

MIS' ABEL: I thought it was Inez. Why didn't you say so in the first place? I hate di-plomacy in man or beast.

PETER (*who has not quite reached the cupboard with the chair, sets it down and turns abruptly*): Well, then, I'll say it now. Mis' Abel! Why don't she treat me right?

MIS' ABEL: Treat *you* right? (PETER, *his momentary courage going, takes the chair on over to the cupboard, turns, nods mutely.*) Why, I don't see how she can. Near as I can make out, you never open your head when you're with her.

PETER (*climbing on chair*): It's funny about me, Mis' Abel. (*From the chair.*) Honest, I dunno what to do about me, sometimes.

MIS' ABEL: Well, *stop* thinkin' about you so much.

PETER (*spreading out his hands*): I do try to. But when I try to think how to stop myself thinking about myself, there's myself thinkin' about me.

MIS' ABEL: Think about somethin' else, then! Get me down that basket. You can stand and talk to me all day. I don't see why you can't talk to her.

PETER (*reaching for basket*): *I* could talk all right enough. But my tongue won't. I could—but my tongue, it won't. (*Turns with the basket.*) Why, some girls I know I can jolly like the dickens. But Inez—when she comes along, Mis' Abel, I can't remember anything I know. (*Has down the basket and turns with it in his hands.*) History now—I know a real lot of history. And about birds and things. I'd *like* to talk with her about them. But last week, when I took her to the picnic, I couldn't think out any of 'em to say no more'n a *hen.*

(*He makes a large gesture with the basket at a perilous angle.*)

MIS' ABEL (*with a quick movement to catch the basket*): Well, don't ask me to tell you how to court. Men that don't know history from a coach-and-four can court successful. (*Hunting for bees-wax in the basket.*) But you can't expect Inez to know whether she likes you or not if you sit like a block. Say something—do something, so's she'll know you're alive.

PETER (*despondently, as he climbs down*) : I know it. I ain't much. An' what little I am don't show through somehow. (*He drags the chair back to its place beside* GRANDMA *in* MIS' ABEL'S *assenting silence. Sets the chair down with a bang.*) Honest, Mis' Abel, I wouldn't care much what happened to me.

(GRANDMA *looks up at him, and drops a ball of carpet rags.* PETER *picks it up and it unrolls away from him toward the door.* GRANDMA *suddenly laughs out, an old woman's laugh, shrill, but not unkindly.*)

PETER (*miserably*) : I guess I *am* a joke.

GRANDMA : Joke nothin'. You're a human. You're a human an' you don't know it. I see a-many in my day.

MIS' ABEL (*waxing her iron*) : Well, a body needn't be a fool if they are human. My goodness, if Inez don't get here with that starch——

(INEZ *comes up on the porch. She is slight, and very girlish. She wears a straight, dull reddish gown. She is hatless and excited.*)

INEZ (*with marked and slightly ironical sweetness to* PETER, *who is almost at the door*) : So sorry to have missed you, Peter. Good-by, then. Mother! Guess!

MIS' ABEL (*ironing*) : Guess what? I'm too busy.

INEZ : Well, but listen. It's important. It's awful——

MIS' ABEL (*pausing, iron in hand, and looking over her shoulder*) : Well, out with it. What is it? What you making such a fuss about it for?

INEZ : It's Mis' Ellsworth's sister. She's died out West. And they're sending her little boy out here to Mis' Ellsworth.

MIS' ABEL (*setting down her iron*) : My land a living! Carry Ellsworth with a boy on top of everything else!

INEZ : I know it. She just heard last night. And she's home trying to think what to do.

MIS' ABEL: When's he going to get here?

INEZ: To-night. To-night on the 7:58.

MIS' ABEL (*pushing her hair back and taking her hat with it*): Ain't that just the end of everything?

INEZ: And her with nobody to do a thing for her.

PETER (*who has dropped the ball again at sight of* INEZ, *has been making more and more of a tangle of the carpet rags ever since she entered*): They couldn't anybody do anything, could they?

INEZ: Well, of course they could! There'll be things for everybody to do that knows her.

(PETER *comes toward her, his tangle of carpet rags following him. He and* INEZ *talk apart, he awkward and mostly mute, she evidently mocking him as they try to disentangle the rags.*)

MIS' ABEL (*has walked over toward* GRANDMA *and stands, one arm akimbo*): Did you understand, Grandma, Carry Ellsworth's sister's boy is coming to live with her.

(*With disapproving emphasis.*)

GRANDMA: Boy? A little boy?

MIS' ABEL: Yes, sir. To-night. Comin' to-night on the 7:58.

GRANDMA (*placidly*): Ain't that nice?

MIS' ABEL: *Nice?* And her all alone in the world?

GRANDMA: Yes. Him comin' and her all alone. She won't be alone no more. I wish't I was younger and could do for one.

MIS' ABEL: My land, I should think you've had enough to do for. I guess you never had no peace till you come into our family that you didn't begin by belongin' to.

GRANDMA (*bursting out*): *Peace!* That's it. Now I've got peace. Peace an' carpet rags.

(*When they are not looking she gives a big white ball of carpet rags a vicious throw through the shed door.*)

MIS' ABEL (*harking back*): Nice. You think it's nice. Why, Carry Ellsworth won't know what to do with a boy no more than nothing in this world. I dunno what she *is* goin' to do to dress him.

INEZ (*turning with the properly wound ball*): We'll have to think of somebody that'll have some cast-off clothes.

MIS' ABEL (*impatiently*): Boy's duds makes awful good weather strips. Before we got the upstairs plastered I use' to wish I'd had a boy or two. It's goin' to be an awful nuisance, doin' for him. There's some of your pa's clothes she might use. I dunno's it'll need clothes first pop, though. But they's everything to think of——

(PETER *starts forward, his face bright with what he means to try to say.*)

PETER: Oh, Inez. . . . That is, oh, Mis' Abel. I'm a boy. I mean I was a boy. I mean I've got some trousers—and a coat—and another coat. Shall I get 'em?

MIS' ABEL: What do you mean—something to cut over? Well, get 'em, of course. What you standing there for? Get 'em and bring 'em here. Inez, you run over an' ask Mis' Trot to come in for a minute. Mind you say *a minute,* or she'll set the whole forenoon.

PETER (*at the door*): Are you comin' now, Inez? I—I go that way too.

INEZ (*airily*): Oh, don't you wait for me, Peter. I've got some things to see to.

(*Exit* PETER, *looking at her dumbly.*)

INEZ: Mother, hasn't Peter got any lungs?

MIS' ABEL: Lungs?

INEZ: Or maybe it's brains. He looks nice enough—he looks real nice. But he acts as if he didn't have good sense when it comes to talkin'.

MIS' ABEL: Your pa was the same way.

INEZ (*indignant*) : *Father?*

MIS' ABEL: Certainly. After we was married, whenever he begun actin' like he knew it all, an' like I wasn't nothin' but the fly-leaf o' things, I used to remember how perfectly simple he did use' to act when I first knew him—when he was first makin' up. An' many's the time I've just laughed to myself, and gone and done like he told me to, sheer through rememberin' how simple and scairt and green he did use to act.

INEZ (*softly*) : Father? *Father!*

MIS' ABEL: Him. Now run for Mis' Trot and don't be lettin' me let my spare room pillow shams dry. I guess I'll carry this one in here out o' the dirt.

(*Exit with sham.*)

GRANDMA: Daniel was like that too. He done things regular greenhorn. I remember the day we was engaged, he almost made such a botch of it I didn't know what he meant. He busts out and says, *"Will you?"* an' I thought he meant would I go to the huskin' bee and I said, "Yes." When I see my mistake—well, I let it go at that. I see what hard work he was makin' of it.

INEZ: That was old uncle Daniel, wasn't it? I remember him. He was awful old.

GRANDMA: Well, but I bet he was consider'ble more up to snuff than your young popinjays is now!

INEZ (*hastily*) : Oh, yes. Oh, I know—— (*She retreats to the door and is met on the threshold by* MIS' ELMIRA MORAN.) Oh, good morning, MIS' MORAN. Come in. Mother'll be back in a minute. Sit down.

(*Exit.*)

MIS' MORAN (*stout, sixty, gets about with difficulty. She has a scarf wound many times about her head, but no shawl. Unwinds scarf deliberately and sinks in rocker as she speaks*) : I dunno as I can. My leg is so bad I can hardly hobble. And my

left shoulder don't get no better. Nor my head—it don't act right. I dunno but my time is come and my grave is diggin' around the next corner. I feel that way. I told Jake so.

(*Enter* Mis' Abel.)

Mis' Abel: Good mornin', Mis' Moran. Ain't it just perfectly dreadful about——

Mis' Moran: Dreadful! I dunno what I am goin' to do if it keeps up. I was just sayin', I said so to Jake only this mornin'. I says, "Jake," I says, "I'm gettin' so that I'm su'prised whenever I wake up alive. Whenever I do it," I says, "it's like every blessed mornin' of my life was a genu-ine resurrection for me. I feel it."

Mis' Abel: What you talkin' about?

Mis' Moran: If that ain't just like Jake's treatment of me. Right while I was talkin' to him, Jake asked me if I'd remembered to set the pancakes. Said he didn't hear me do it.

Mis' Abel: Well, but land, land—what's that got to do——

Mis' Moran: I'd been goin' to tell him about my back, but I hadn't the heart. I just laid and cried. Mis' Abel, my back's been behavin' so queer, I can hardly move it. Why, the last few days——

Mis' Abel (*positively*): Just you put your finger on the place, Elmiry Moran, till I tell you the news. Carry Ellsworth's got a baby.

Mis' Moran (*sits bolt upright suddenly and with ease*): A *what?*

Mis' Abel: Yes, sir. It ain't here yet. It's due to-night.

Mis' Moran (*rises, steps toward* Mis' Abel *easily and eagerly*): What under the sun do you mean, Dianthy Abel? Carry Ellsworth's goin' to have a baby . . .

Mis' Abel: To-night. On the 7:58. Her sister's that died out West. At least the boy's alive and they're sending him to her.

Mis' Moran (*limps slowly back to her chair*): You'd ought not to

give me them turns, Dianthy. The doctor says I mustn't forget for a single minute the condition I'm in. How old is he?

MIS' ABEL: Well, let me see. . . .

(INEZ *appears in doorway with* MIS' TROT. MIS' TROT *is little and "wiry" and active and alert. She comes in with a collar in one hand and a brooch in the other.*)

INEZ: Here's Mis' Trot, Mother.

MIS' TROT: Well, did you ever *hear* anything like it, ever? Carry Ellsworth, of all the folks under the canopy.

MIS' ABEL: That's just exactly what I said.

INEZ (*going to table where lamps are ranged and beginning to clean them*): How much does she get a month now?

MIS' TROT (*at the mirror over the shelf, putting on her collar, speaks with the brooch between her lips*): Why, she only gets her eight dollars a month pension from her husband's leg.

MIS' ABEL: And then of course whatever she earns substitutin' clerkin', when clerks are sick.

MIS' MORAN: But barrin' Christmas week I don't believe that amounts to shucks for pay.

MIS' TROT (*drawing up as a matter of course to help* INEZ *with the lamp chimneys*): It struck me all of a heap. An' we'd just found a buffalo bug in the parlour carpet. Yes, sir. A buffalo bug. In my *parlour*. I tried to step on it—but you know how they are. No corpse to 'em whatever. I couldn't tell whether I hit it or not—and they always run like horses. I've come right off an' left him there, if he *is* there. I wouldn't of done such a thing, but, thinks I, what's Carry Ellsworth goin' to *do?* How old's this child?

MIS' ABEL: That's what we was figurin' when you come in. Now, Lucretia Ellsworth was married the year we moved out of the Kane house—no, that was Elmira, wasn't it? I guess Lucretia wasn't married till the next year. We was livin' in the Mitchell house.

MIS' MORAN: I thought you lived in the Mitchell house before you lived in the Kane? Wasn't you livin' in the Mitchell house when our barn burned?

MIS' TROT: N—o. (*That peculiar, long-drawn "no," with a sound of d in the n.*) You wasn't. Why—(*to* MIS' MORAN)—your barn never burned till the winter I was livin' alone. I remember wakin' up alone in the house and seein' the glare.

MIS' ABEL: I *know* we was livin' in the Mitchell house when Lucretia was married because I remember runnin' acrost home for more spoons durin' the ceremony. I know I missed my cry altogether, 'count o' not gettin' back till the congratulations. I'd hid my spoons in the spare room closet and I come over after 'em, all hurried and rattled an' dressed up and I could *not* remember where I'd put them. Let's see that was six—seven—eight——

MIS' MORAN: Oh, that wasn't more'n seven years ago this summer. Because we bought out the Sparks grocery most eight years ago, an' I remember sellin' Hackett Ellsworth the five pounds o' rice.

MIS' TROT: Why, Mis' Moran—it was *all* of eight years ago. You forget how Time flies. I'd 'a' said nine, to be on the safe side.

MIS' ABEL: Yes, it must 'a' been eight years ago. I know it was the year Inez had her first ready-made suit. Yes, Carry's boy must be about six-seven years old. It don't seem possible.

INEZ: Carry? I thought you said Lucretia's wedding?

MIS' ABEL: Well, Carry was married right after. She hadn't meant to be so soon. But her father didn't want to put up the parlour stove so long's the girls wasn't goin' to be home, so she was married in the fall to save the bother of a stove weddin'.

MIS' MORAN: Six-seven years old. Land, land. Just the hard age to take care of, when they begin to be smart. What *is* she goin' to do?

MIS' ABEL: Just his mere victuals is an item.

MIS' TROT (*sighing*): Yes, sir. Another mouth is another mouth excep' when it's a boy's mouth. Then it's a regular bureau drawer.

MIS' MORAN: This is goin' to be an awful pull for the poor thing. She wouldn't take money, though, I don't suppose, even if anybody had any to offer her?

INEZ: Oh—not money!

MIS' TROT: No—the last way to help anybody is to give 'em money.

MIS' MORAN: Well, of course Carry'll look to us all to advise her some.

MIS' TROT: Oh, I dunno but advice is next worse than money.

MIS' ABEL: Well, it's goin' to be a terrible lot of trouble, whatever way you look at it. I should say the thing she needs is a *job*. But while she's gettin' it she'd ought to have some clothes and some extry bedding and I dunno what all. And you know what that means—attemptin' to get together truck like that.

MIS' TROT: I could 'a' done a little somethin' to-day if it hadn't been for that buffalo bug. But as it is I mustn't stay a minute longer. That animal'll be up into my lace curtains. How you goin' to go at gettin' the stuff together?

MIS' ABEL (*ironing hard*): Well, I do hate to load it onto her in tied-up bundles at the back door. I dunno but we'd ought to go to the trouble of a pound party or somethin' like that.

MIS' TROT (*looking up with changing expression*): That would be kind of nice—wouldn't it?

MIS' ABEL: Carry didn't have much of any wedding presents. And she never had a baby. I dunno as I ever set foot in her house to any real occasion excep' a funeral. (*Turns with her iron in her hand.*) S'posin' we was to give her a kind of a shower?

MIS' MORAN: A what? A shower?

MIS' TROT: Like they have for babies?

INEZ: Oh, no. I know what Mother means. Like they have for brides.

MIS' ABEL (*sets down her iron, turns and leans against the ironing-board. Puts pillow sham on chair-back*): I mean a shower—

whether for bride, babe, or just anybody. It would be a lot of backaching work, but we could make it real nice for her.

GRANDMA (*who has worked on, without looking up, until* MIS' ABEL *has said "shower." Then she has listened*): So you could. Go on and do it. Seems to me you could make it so sort of sociable and friendly it wouldn't seem a bit nasty, like charity does.

MIS' TROT (*looking away, with expression growing more rapt*): Be kind of nice if you could have it the night the child gets here. But that's to-night. Of course you couldn't do that.

MIS' MORAN: Well, of course, I can't do a thing on account o' my back. But I should think if you could scrape the things together to-day so's to take 'em with you when you go, you could have it to-night all right.

MIS' TROT (*sitting upright—not suddenly, but still with her rapt manner, leaning forward with her hands across her knees*): An' be there with 'em when she comes back from the depot with the boy!

MIS' MORAN: And you could have all the things she needs piled in the middle of the front room floor and you be in there with the door shut when she got there—(*edging forward on her chair*)—clothes and groceries an' I dunno but some toys——

MIS' ABEL: Be an awful job, managin'. How'd we let ourselves into the house?

MIS' TROT (*really kindling*): Easiest thing in the world. I could go in an' set with her awhile before she starts for the 7:58. I could take her in a cup o' jell, or somethin'. And then I could tell her I'd set there on the porch so's to have a look at him when she got back.

MIS' ABEL: And then you could let us all in. That's the ticket! My land, look at me near settin' on my spare room pillow sham.

MIS' TROT (*laying down last lamp chimney and going to the door to shake the cloth. Speaks over shoulder, shaking cloth*): Well, you do that and you can count on me to be over there when you

come. You won't have much trouble gettin' the stuff. (*Giving the cloth to* INEZ *and turning toward the door.*) I've got to get back to that buffalo bug now, or it'll be layin' eggs in every pattern in the carpet.

(INEZ *carries lamps to their high shelf, puts away cloths.*)

MIS' ABEL: You come back here.

MIS' TROT (*looks at her in surprise*): But——

MIS' ABEL: You can't be going home, not with all there'll be to see to.

MIS' TROT: I just can't do it. That buffalo bug——

MIS' ABEL: You forget that buffalo bug, Mis' Trot, an' tell us what to have for refreshments. Strawberries? Or a little canned fruit and loaf-cake?

MIS' TROT (*returning*): Why, of course, we've got to feed 'em. I never thought o' that. *Canned fruit.* I'd just as soon anybody'd set me down to oatmeal as canned fruit—*when* it's a party. Strawberries—well. . . . No, for the land's sakes, if we're going to do it, let's us do it. Let's us have ice-cream or nothin'. . . .

MIS' MORAN: Be nice for the little boy, too.

MIS' ABEL: But, my land, it costs so to buy it——

MIS' TROT: Buy it? Who said anything about buying it? I'll freeze it. I can make it cheaper'n anybody in this town.

MIS' ABEL: Well, of course you can. That's what we'll do. You freeze it.

MIS' TROT (*excitedly*): I can make it for fourteen cents a quart and freeze it myself, puttin' in our own cow and chickens. Yes, I'll do it—buffalo bug or no buffalo bug. A gallon'll be enough. We can all chip in——

(*Stamping up on the porch comes* EZRA WILLIAMS. *He is still more exasperated, and he comes in without greeting and with his hat on his head.*)

EZRA: Well, I been to both you folks's houses, huntin' you up. An' I been down town lookin' for the men. Which one o' you ordered wood? Whoever it was can send your men folks straight out here and unpile it from in front of my door, a stick at a time.

MIS' ABEL: I've told him we didn't order no wood.

MIS' MORAN: Well, *we* didn't. We been cuttin' wood from the wood lot for years.

MIS' TROT: We don't burn none. We burn soft coal—what we have left over after we've sprinkled the house with it thorough, an' our clothes an' our hands an' our necks.

EZRA (*stands puzzled but still warlike*): Well, it's somebody's fool wood. It must belong somewheres in the block. Just ask your men folks when they come home this noon. I bet you one of 'em——

MIS' ABEL: Let's tell him. Wait a minute, Ezra. We want——

EZRA: I can't wait. I've got my hands so full they sag.

INEZ: Oh, Mr. Williams! I know whose wood that is. It must be Mis' Ellsworth's. I heard her wonderin' this morning why it hadn't come.

EZRA: Well, of all the snide swindles! I've got too much to do to unpile no cord of wood for no woman, widow or worse. . . .

(*He is at the threshold when* MIS' ABEL *stops him.*)

MIS' ABEL (*clapping her hands and following him*): Ezra! Ezra Williams. Stop goin' on and listen hard. Carry Ellsworth's sister's boy is comin' on to her to-night to support.

EZRA (*at the door*): Support? Well, I can't help that. I'm doin' some supportin' myself—working my wings off at it. And when it comes to an extry job for nothin'. . . .

MIS' ABEL: Yes, but Carry Ellsworth ain't you. Here's a boy plumpin' down on her to feed and clothe and lug up to man's estate.

EZRA: Well, ain't that just like a woman! Always gettin' herself come down onto by a lot o' distant relatives to support.

MIS' ABEL: Well, it *is* goin' to make trouble for everybody, but we thought we'd ought to——

MIS' MORAN: We thought it'd be real nice to do for her friendly, at a party——

MIS' TROT: And have 'em have refreshments—ice-cream and cake. And have everybody bring things.

MIS' ABEL: Wait till I tell him. And all be there when she gets back from the depot—all waiting, in her house, to s'prise her. Couldn't you get hold of some men and see what they could get together? Us ladies'll see to some clothes but——

MIS' MORAN: You scrape up some money, Ezra. Or some groceries —canned stuff, or like that——

MIS' TROT: And have 'em all sent to one place, hadn't we better?

MIS' ABEL: Have 'em all sent here. Then some of the men can come and tote 'em over when we see her go off to meet the 7:58.

EZRA (*who has stood shaking his head, edging away*): Yah—pa'cel o' women. Ain't that just like 'em? Do you think I ain't got anything else to do? Ain't enough o' you women to tend to the society end of this town and its relations? No—don't you expect no time out of me. I might send over some little thing—but I ain't a minute to spare to-day, I tell you.

(*He is out the door with the last words.*)

GRANDMA (*who has been looking up at him with fixed attention*): Well, now, would you think *any*body would be that much interested in cord wood?

MIS' ABEL: No, sir, you wouldn't.

MIS' MORAN: Well, ain't that just awful for him not to do one thing?

MIS' TROT: Him with nothin' but cord wood on his hands, mind you —and me with a buffalo bug!

MIS' ABEL: As near as I can see we've got to put this thing through

ourselves. You take up-street, Mis' Trot, and Mis' Moran, you take down-street—and I'll take the business part. Everybody's always after them, so I think you really squirm more askin' though you do get it so easy. Inez, you might be lookin' up some of your old picture books for the boy, or somethin' to amuse him. Come on, ladies.

MIS' TROT, MIS' ABEL, MIS' MORAN (*all talking together as they go out,* MIS' MORAN *having forgotten her limp*): Who'll I get to bake the cakes? Well, I'd get some good cake makers, for mercy's sakes, and there's only about six in town. I know where I'm going for a cake. I'm goin' straight for Mis' Ezra Williams.

(*Exeunt all three.*)

INEZ: I'll iron off a flat piece or two first.

(*She goes to the shed to change the iron.*)

GRANDMA (*peering out of the windows, through the plants*): Dum 'em. They've gone off to do things. And I'm so old, so fool old. (*She smites her hands together.*) Oh, God. Can't you make us hurry? Can't you *make* us hurry? Get us to the time when we won't have to dry up like a pippin before we're ready to be took off? Our heads an' our hearts an' our legs an' our backs—oh, make 'em last busy, *busy,* right up to the time the hearse backs up to the door!

INEZ (*returns, picks up a piece from the basket, looks over at her*): What's the matter, Grandma?

GRANDMA: Eh, nothin'. Only, I'm *folks.* That's all. I mean I was folks—me that was folks and now ain't.

(INEZ *looks at her, puzzled, and stands rubbing the iron on a newspaper when* PETER *re-appears in the doorway, the sugar under his arm, and in his hand a paper.*)

PETER: Mis' Abel! I forgot to ask you just what things you need for that little boy—— Oh, you here, Inez? I thought you was out. I thought—— Here's your mother's sugar.

INEZ (*cooling her iron and not looking at him*): I'm sorry Mother isn't in. She'll be back in a few minutes. Won't you come back then?

PETER: Inez! I've got lots of conversation in me.

(INEZ *searches his face swiftly. Goes on with ironing.*)

PETER (*with determination*): I mean I don't say half the things I could say.

INEZ (*with a moment of understanding and sympathy, she leans on the board and looks at him*): What about, Peter?

PETER: About—about—oh, things. I think of so many things, Inez, when I'm alone, that I'd like to tell you.

INEZ (*still the same*): Why *don't* you tell me, Peter? What are they about?

PETER: Well, woods things, and about water rats—and gophers—and —and—birds' nests!

INEZ (*still understanding, still patient*): Well, I like these things, too, you know, Peter. Tell me some now.

PETER (*looking wild*): Well. . . . Birds' nests. They's—they's quite a few birds' nests in the trees this spring. . . .

INEZ (*bursts into sudden uncontrollable laughter*): In the trees! Oh, come now, Peter! Not birds' nests in the trees! Oh. . . . *Peter!* You mustn't tell me things like that!

PETER (*struggling desperately*): Well, orioles now. Orioles. . . . I saw an oriole by Thatcher's barn. It's note was all wavy——

INEZ (*grave again*): I know it. I've heard 'em. I love 'em.

PETER: And I thought—what was it I thought when I heard him call. . . .

INEZ: What . . . Peter?

(*Sets down her iron and, an elbow in her hand, the other hand over her mouth, she watches him quizzically and somewhat wistfully.*)

PETER (*simply*): It was something I liked to think. And I know I thought how you'd like it too. Most folks don't hear 'em call. Lots of folks don't hear lots of things. But you do. And I do. Ain't that kind of nice—like them things was for you and me. . . . (*He catches at a corner of her apron, lifts it, and drops it, disconcerted.*) Mebbe you dunno what I mean.

INEZ: Oh, Peter, Peter, Peter! (*Laughs with her eyes shut.*) Oh, *Peter!*

PETER (*turns away, looks up in another part of the room*): I know it. I don't know why it is I can't talk to you, Inez. I think of things I want to say to you, but when I'm with you I don't seem able to think 'em over again. There's history, now. I was readin' some history last night. There was so many things I wanted to tell you in it. I—I know you'd of thought so, too!

INEZ: Really. You think I would. Well, then, here I am. Try me!

PETER: I can't. I didn't plan it out this way—and you laughing.

INEZ: Oh, tell me—do. Was it about robbers—and princesses—and castles, Peter? Was it about knights and swords and roses——

PETER: Oh, it was better things. One was about Peter the Great, you know. Him. He was a—my, he was just a dandy!

INEZ (*now really at the end of her patience*): Was that what you wished to tell me?

PETER (*miserably*): No. But——

INEZ: Because if it was, I'm not in the least interested in Peter the Great! Not-in-the-least! (*She marches across the floor to the shed door to renew her iron, and on the threshold she turns, overcome again by the sorry figure he has cut.*) Peter, oh, Peter. . . .

(*Laughs with her eyes shut, and goes into the shed.* PETER *sits where she has left him, and drops his head in his hands.*)

GRANDMA (*suddenly wheels in her chair*): Young man! (PETER *lifts his head.*) Do you call that courtin'? (PETER *makes a*

helpless gesture.) Because if I couldn't court no better than that I'd go and batch it and be done with it. You court like a stick of wood.

PETER (*with a hopeless gesture*): What'll I do?

GRANDMA: Do? Do what most everybody in the world has to do before they can fit their skins and skulls. Quit thinkin' about yourself. Dunce!

PETER: Well, but I—I——

(INEZ *comes back with the iron.* GRANDMA *subsides.* PETER *rises miserably.*)

PETER: I guess I'll have to be going.

INEZ: Oh, must you? Well, good-by, Peter.

PETER: I s'pose it's all done there is to do about the little chap—the one that's coming?

INEZ: Why, of course it isn't. Who did you think did it all?

PETER: Do—do you think I could be any use to 'em?

(INEZ *amazes him by dropping her flatiron with a clatter on the ironing-stand and bursting into sobs.*)

PETER: Inez! What is it?

(*He leaps to her, for the first time unconscious of himself, and puts his arms about her. For just a moment she leans to him, then springs free and speaks angrily.*)

INEZ: It's nothing. It's nothing, I tell you. Go 'way, Peter. Please go 'way.

PETER (*stands still for a moment, then flings up his head and speaks in wonder*): Inez! Inez! Do you *care* because I'm a fool?

INEZ: Go 'way, Peter. Please go 'way.

PETER: Well, I will go—now. But by the great horn spoon, Inez, I'll come back!

(*He rushes out.* INEZ *runs to* GRANDMA, *sinks beside her, buries her face in her gown.*)

INEZ: Grandma, grandma. Why can't he be like other folks? *Why* can't he be like other folks?

GRANDMA (*with great tenderness*): Hush . . . dearie. Hardly anybody ever is. Hardly *any*body is.

(*Moment's pause.*)

(*The door opens, and* MIS' ABEL *enters sidewise, her arms piled with old clothes. She is calling to somebody over her shoulder.*)

MIS' ABEL: Well, supposin' they *are* too big? Send 'em along—send 'em along. I've cut over more of 'em than I ever made new ones. (*Closes the door behind her by pushing against it.*) My land, that's been a tug. Folks has kept a-givin' me things an' I've kep' sayin' I'd take 'em right along. (*Dropping things on the floor and keeping them together.*) I know 'em. If folks had waited to send the stuff by somebody they'd 'a' took to lookin' it over again an' got to snippin' off the buttons and mebbe decide they was too good to give away at all. You needn't tell me. Folks is *folks.*

GRANDMA (*patting* INEZ'S *arms*—INEZ *has risen, and stands surreptitiously drying her eyes*): That's it—that's it. Folks is folks, no matter how different—or similar. They can't fool us. Folks is folks.

INEZ (*turns and sees the garments which her mother is vaguely sorting*): Oh, Mother, how fine. Isn't that a pile? How fine!

(*Examines the garments and after a moment goes to the shed with her flatiron.*)

MIS' ABEL: They's everything here. Enough to clothe Carry Ellsworth's nephew till he's black in the face.

(*Enter* MIS' TROT, *breathless.*)

MIS' TROT: I've solicited the rest of the stuff for the ice cream and I've got four cakes promised. (*Seeing the things on the floor.*) What a lot of splendid truck!

MIS' ABEL: Well, I'm most dead luggin' it.

(*She is stooping, turning over the things.*)

MIS' TROT (*looking toward the door*): And ain't the air nice in the forenoon? It seems like breathin' somethin' else. Comin' along by the wood yard, somethin'—I dunno whether it was the smell of the cedar shingles or the way the fence looked so nice and shady—but—(*little laugh*)—I ain't never felt so much like when I was a girl since I was born one. If it hadn't been for the thoughts of that buffalo bug in the house, I declare I would most of enjoyed myself.

MIS' ABEL (*in falsetto*): Did you? Why, I was just thinkin' that out in Main Street—that it seemed somethin' like quite a while ago. I thought it was the smell of the sage where somebody was fryin' pork, but mebbe it wasn't.

(*Enter* MIS' MORAN. *She is walking nearly erect and is hurrying somewhat.*)

MIS' MORAN: It's all right. I just see Carry Ellsworth goin' into the post office, and I turned in on purpose. I told her somebody'd come over to-night and set while she went to the station, and be there when she comes back. She seemed to like the idee. Is this stuff all here?

MIS' ABEL: Yes, and more to come. Don't you think we'd best all be setting in there in the dark when she gets there with him, and all of us yell "Shower," shan't we? Just like they do?

MIS' TROT (*down on the floor beside the things*): Poor little soul—it's him I'm a-thinkin' of. His mother dead and his home broke up and him dragged away from what folks he knows. *Look here!* Well, of course we're glad to have any of these things. (*Holds up a very ragged garment.*) How's this for a contribution? Nobody could patch that without they had a piece of cloth the size of the American flag—and not a button on it. I'll bet you Mis' Hemenway give this—didn't she now?

MIS' ABEL (*looking closely*): Yes, sir, she did. If you'd packed as many missionary barrels as I have you'd 'a' known it was Mis' Hemenway's without lookin'. Mis' Hemenway is a splendid cake-maker, but she *is* near-sighted about gifts she gives the poor.

MIS' TROT (*goes on sorting*): I got to thinkin', supposin' it had been my Jeddie, if I'd been took, and him trapsed off to a strange state, and all. Ain't it real pitiful—well, now, would you think anybody'd give away a thing as good as that is?

(*She holds up a garment, and* MIS' MORAN, *who has been shaking her head over the other one, takes it from her.*)

MIS' MORAN: No, I would *not*. Why, it looks like new from the store. They ain't a thread broke in it. *And* the buttons on. Who give this, Mis' Abel?

MIS' ABEL (*who is piling up some things from the lot on the table*): I was wondering what he'd be like? Nice little thing, I guess maybe—Carry's so nice. . . . (*Looks at the garment.*) Oh, that's Mis' Fitch—couldn't you tell? Her that always sends a thirteen-egg angels' food to the church suppers when a loaf o' pound cake would go down just as easy.

MIS' TROT: And her husband on thirty dollars a month. My good land, ain't folks the funniest things?

(*They all shake heads and compress lips, and* MIS' TROT *goes "T-t-t-t-t."*)

GRANDMA: Ah—ain't you got used to that about folks yet, Mis' Trot? I want to know—I want to know. It don't hurt folks none to be funny, does it?

INEZ (*who is entering from the shed*): Grandma, look. Here was one of your balls of carpet rags rolled way out there. Would you think it could?

GRANDMA (*peering at it*): That's the very one I been lookin' for. I want it for the head.

INEZ: The head of *what*, Grandma?

GRANDMA: Never you mind. I got my own occupations. You ain't the only busy folks in the world, if you do act so cocky about it. I need something to do for as well as you.

INEZ (*who has been looking out the window*): Mother, Mis' Ellsworth is coming.

MIS' ABEL: Mis' Ellsworth!

(The women scurry around but they are too late. MIS' ELLSWORTH *enters. She is a slight, pretty woman in a light blue gingham gown and wide straw hat. She is much agitated, and sinks in a chair by the door. She has a letter and a little parcel in her hand.)*

MIS' ABEL *(with the other two women, trying to hide the piles of garments)*: Why, Carry Ellsworth! You did give me a start. I'm—we've—we're—don't this look like carpet rags, though?

MIS' ELLSWORTH *(hardly hears)*: Oh, ladies. I've just got a letter —I've had another letter. 'Seems my little boy ain't comin' at all.

ALL *(save* GRANDMA*)*: Not comin'?

MIS' ELLSWORTH *(slowly)*: No. A sister of his pa's decided last minute she'd take him in. She's got five of her own, but she writes she dunno's one more'll make any difference.

MIS' ABEL *(sitting limply back in the clothes)*: Well, ain't that just the end of everything!

MIS' MORAN: Well, Carry—you can't help it, but be glad the little fellow ain't had all the way to come alone.

MIS' TROT: An' I ain't a doubt in the world he's got a better home than you could give him—anybody that can afford to have five children is rich enough to have six.

MIS' ABEL: And it *was* going to be awful hard on you to have him to do for.

MIS' ELLSWORTH: I know, I know. But it's goin' to be awful hard for me not to have him to do for. Last night—when I begun to plan—it come over me like it never done before what I'd missed in *not* bein' left with one. I was goin' to make him a bed on the lounge—I'd got it planned what clothes I could spare for the bed, and what I could make more of. I never got meals for a child—and I'd begun thinkin' what he could eat and what little things I could fix up for him. I was plannin' to keep chickens and to fix a sandpile in the backyard and a swing under

the maple out in front—and I was thinkin' about his school and who'd be his teacher and what desk he'd have. I just see this little cap in the post-office store and I bought it for him. (*Unwraps a cap from a little package.*) I thought the feather'd look kind o' cute, stickin' up in front. And now here comes this—and it's all for nothin'—it's all for nothin'.

MIS' ABEL: But, Mis' Ellsworth, it *would* be hard for you. It would now!

MIS' ELLSWORTH: I'd like that kind o' hard.

MIS' TROT: And s'pose you'd of took down sick?

MIS' ELLSWORTH: Better body sick than heart sick.

MIS' MORAN: And s'pose you'd of *died,* Mis' Ellsworth?

MIS' ELLSWORTH: I'd of lived first now, anyway. And now I ain't. I never knew it—but I ain't.

MIS' ABEL: Oh, but Mis' Ellsworth. You've got your health and your gettin' along economical to brood over as it is.

MIS' ELLSWORTH: This would of kept me from broodin'.

(INEZ *goes softly, and mutely slips her arm about* MIS' ELLSWORTH.)

MIS' ABEL (*openly breaks down and wipes her eyes on the garment she is holding*): Oh, ladies! What's the use? We all know. I ain't had but one, but I know.

MIS' TROT: Yes. I've got seven an' sometimes I'm drove most to death with 'em—but I know.

MIS' MORAN: Well, I never had none—but I know.

GRANDMA: Eh, mine's dead—all dead. But I know.

INEZ: Oh, Mis' Ellsworth. An' I know, too.

(*In a moment at the door appears* PETER, *his arms ludicrously full of clothes and parcels.*)

PETER: Look, Inez, look-a-here. See all I got a holt of—for the little chap.

(*He sees their mood and pauses, crestfallen.*)

INEZ (*goes to him swiftly*): Peter! What a lot you got. Dear Peter.

(*The door is pushed open by* EZRA WILLIAMS. *He has a small, closely wrapped bundle under an arm, and he is carrying a little chair.*)

EZRA (*handing bundle to* MIS' ABEL): There's a few little things my wife just sent over. This here little chair—I made it myself for our little boy before he was hardly out o' long dresses. I done the whole thing—pegged it myself, so's he could throw it around and it wouldn't get broke. He—he never grew up enough to use it . . . it's been settin' around my workroom—kind of in the way. It ought to be doin' somebody some good.

MIS' ABEL: That's certainly good of you, Ezra.

EZRA: Say, you'd ought to see Mis' Ellsworth's wood, piled by her back door neat as a kitten's foot. She ain't to home—— (*Sees for the first time that* MIS' ELLSWORTH *is there, over near* GRANDMA.) Good souls! Have I let the cat out of the bag?

MIS' ABEL: No, Ezra—no, no. I was tryin' to tell you. He ain't comin'. The little boy ain't comin' after all.

EZRA: He ain't comin'?

MIS' ELLSWORTH (*coming forward*): No, Ezra. They ain't goin' to give him to me. Somebody else has took him.

EZRA: Well, ain't that a shame. (*Bristling.*) Who's got him? Want I should get him for you?

MIS' ELLSWORTH (*shaking her head*): No—you can't, Ezra. But you don't know—you'll never know how I feel about what you've done a'ready—you and the ladies and Peter and Grandma. . . . Would—you mind if we looked at the little clothes?

EZRA: No—why, look at 'em. They ain't much, I guess, for now-a-days. But his ma says she'd like you to have 'em. They was real good cloth in the beginnin'.

MIS' ELLSWORTH (*fingering the garments, turns quickly to the*

women): Ain't that what it is to have neighbours? Ain't it, though? Look at the bother you've been to. . . . An' now I won't need 'em.

MIS' ABEL: Don't you think a thing about us. We was glad to do it. I was feelin' cross as a wolf with all I had to do when Inez come in with the news. (*She is taking off her hat as she speaks.*) And now I feel—I feel like folks. An' Mis' Moran's leg and her back and Mis' Trot's buffalo bug—I guess they feel just the same about it.

GRANDMA: And me. So do I. I was just hatin' the sight o' my carpet rags. But look at what I stodged up for the little chap.

(*She holds up an absurd black doll with a white head.*)

MIS' ELLSWORTH: Oh, Grandma!

GRANDMA: Don't you thank me. I liked doin' it. It was somethin' for somebody. It was real human to do.

MIS' ABEL: Well, we might as well pick 'em up.

INEZ (*turning to* PETER, *who stands apart*): Peter, how dear of you to get all these things for him.

(MIS' ABEL *unwraps them, and they draw about her to look, all save* PETER, *who is standing a little apart.* INEZ *turns to him.*)

PETER: I didn't get 'em *all* for him. I got 'em part for you.

INEZ: Well—it was dear of you anyway. What—what's that in your pocket, Peter?

PETER (*brings shyly from his pocket a little clown-on-a-stick*): I saw it in the store. I didn't know but what he might like it. If he ain't a-comin' we might as well throw it away.

INEZ: No! Give it to me.

PETER (*still holding toy and looking down at it*): Why, it's nothin' but a clown. Like me, I guess. . . .

INEZ: Well, I want it all the same. . . . Oh, Peter, Peter, what a dear you are when you forget yourself!

(*He looks at her breathlessly, then suddenly takes her*

in his arms . . . and as he does so, tosses the clown-on-a-stick into the little vacant chair.)

PETER: Inez—Inez! Do you *mean* that? Oh, Inez, I tell you I'm forgettin' now. I'll never remember any more. (*He kisses her.*)

(*As they stand so,* MIS' ABEL *turns and sees them. The others follow her look.* GRANDMA, *too, and they all turn and look at each other, silent and smiling. And then* GRANDMA *rises, and comes slowly down to them—bent and peering and kindly, and holding by one arm the doll she has made. As she passes the little vacant chair, near which* INEZ *and* PETER *stand, she drops the doll over the chair's back in order to take their hands. She stands between and a little back of them, facing the audience. She looks up at them and tries to speak to each in turn, and gives it up with a little helpless gesture and a smile and a hand patting the shoulder of each. They are all gathered near the two, the little garments* EZRA *has brought still in the women's hands and* MIS' ELLSWORTH *still holding the cap with the feather.*)

MIS' ABEL (*wiping her eyes swiftly*): Strikes me the little chap is accountable for a whole heap he never even heard of.

GRANDMA: Eh—most folks always is.

CURTAIN

CONFESSIONAL *

BY

PERCIVAL WILDE

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CHARACTERS

ROBERT BALDWIN
MARTHA, *his wife*
JOHN, *his son*
EVIE, *his daughter*
MARSHALL
A MAID

THE SCENE: At Baldwin's.

CONFESSIONAL

It is a rather hot and sultry Sunday afternoon, and the sun overhead and the baked clay under foot are merciless. In the distance, lowering clouds give promise of coming relief. And at the parlor window of a trim little cottage the Baldwin family is anxiously awaiting the return of its head.

JOHN, *the son, an average young man of twenty-seven, is smoking a pipe as philosophically as if this day were in no whit more momentous than any other. But his mother, trying to compose herself with her knitting, has made little progress in the last half hour; and* EVIE, *his sister, takes no pains to conceal her nervousness.*

There is a tense pause. It seems as if none of them likes to break the silence. For the tenth time in ten minutes, EVIE *goes to the window and looks out along the sultry road.*

MARTHA: It's time he was home.

EVIE: Yes, mother.

MARTHA: I do hope he hasn't forgotten his umbrella: he has such a habit of leaving it behind him——

EVIE: Yes, mother.

MARTHA: It might rain. Don't you think so, Evie? (*Without waiting for an answer she goes to the window and looks out anxiously.*) The sky is so dark. (*She starts.*) There was a flash of lightning! (JOHN *rises slowly, moves to a center table, and knocks the ashes out of his pipe. His mother turns to him.*) John, run into your father's room and see that the windows are closed. There's a good boy.

JOHN: Right-o. (*He goes.*)

EVIE (*after a pause*): Mother. (*There is no answer.*) Mother! (MRS. BALDWIN *turns slowly.*) What does Mr. Gresham want with him? Has he done anything wrong?

MARTHA (*proudly*): Your father? No, Evie.

EVIE: Then why did Mr. Gresham send for him?

MARTHA: He wanted to talk to him.

EVIE: What about? Mr. Gresham has been arrested: they're going to try him to-morrow. What can he want with father?

MARTHA: Your father will have to testify.

EVIE: But he's going to testify *against* Mr. Gresham. Why should Mr. Gresham want to see him?

MARTHA: I don't know, Evie. You know, your father doesn't say much about his business affairs. (*She pauses.*) *I* didn't know there was anything wrong with the bank until I saw it in the papers. Your father wouldn't tell me to draw my money out—he thought it wasn't loyal to Mr. Gresham. (EVIE *nods.*) I did it of my own accord—against his wishes—when I suspected——

EVIE (*after a pause*): Do you think that father had anything to do with—with—— (*She does not like to say it.*)

MARTHA: With the wrecking of the bank? You know him better than that, Evie.

EVIE: But did he know what was going on? You know what the papers are saying——

MARTHA: They haven't been fair to him, Evie.

EVIE: Perhaps not. But they said he must have been a fool not to know. They said that only he could have known—he and Mr. Gresham. Why didn't he stop it?

MARTHA: He was acting under Mr. Gresham's orders.

EVIE (*contemptuously*): Mr. Gresham's orders! Did he have to follow them?

MARTHA (*after a pause*): Evie, I don't believe your father ever did a wrong thing in his life—not if he knew it was wrong. He found out by accident—found out what Mr. Gresham was doing.

EVIE: How do you know that?

MARTHA: I don't know it: I suspect it—something he said. (*Eagerly.*) You see, Evie, he *can't* have done anything wrong. They haven't indicted him.

EVIE (*slowly*): No. They didn't indict him—because they want him to testify against Mr. Gresham. That's little consolation, mother. (JOHN *re-enters.*)

MARTHA (*seizing the relief*): Were the windows open, John?

JOHN (*shortly*): I've closed them. (*He crosses to the table, takes up his pipe, and refills it.*) Look here, mater: what does Gresham want with the governor?

EVIE (*nodding*): I've just been asking that.

MARTHA: I don't know, John.

JOHN: Didn't you ask him? (*As she does not answer.*) Well?

MARTHA: Yes, I asked him. He didn't say, John. (*Anxiously.*) I don't think he knew himself.

JOHN (*after an instant's thought*): I was talking to the assistant cashier yesterday.

EVIE: Donovan?

JOHN: Yes, Donovan. I saw him up at the Athletic Club. He said that nobody had any idea that there was anything wrong until the crash came. Donovan had been there eight years. He thought he was taken care of for the rest of his life. He had gotten married on the strength of it. And then, one morning, there was a sign up on the door. It was like a bolt out of a clear sky.

EVIE: And father?

JOHN: He says the governor must have known. He'll swear nobody

else did. You see, father was closer to Gresham than anyone else. That puts him in a nice position, doesn't it?

MARTHA: What do you mean, John?

JOHN: The governor the only witness against John Gresham—and me named after him! John Gresham Baldwin, at your service!

MARTHA: Your father will do his duty, John, no matter what comes of it.

JOHN (*shortly*): I know it. And I'm not sure but what it's right. (*They look at him inquiringly.*) There's John Gresham, grown rich in twenty years, and the governor pegging along as his secretary at sixty dollars a week!

MARTHA: Your father never complained.

JOHN: No; that's just the pity of it. He didn't complain. Well, he'll have his chance to-morrow. He'll go on the stand, and when he's through, they'll put John Gresham where he won't be able to hurt anybody for a while. Wasn't satisfied with underpaying his employés: had to rob his depositors! Serves him jolly well right!

MARTHA (*rather timidly*): I don't think your father would like you to talk that way, John.

JOHN (*shrugs his shoulders with a contemptuous*): "Humph!"

MARTHA: Your father has nothing against Mr. Gresham. He will tell the truth—nothing but the truth.

JOHN: Did you think I expected him to lie? Not father! He'll tell the truth: just the truth. It'll be plenty!

EVIE (*at the window*): There's father now!

(*There is the click of a latchkey outside.* EVIE *makes for the door.*)

MARTHA: Evie! You stay here: let me talk to him first.

(MARTHA *hurries out.* JOHN *and* EVIE *look at each other.*)

JOHN: Wonder what Gresham had to say to him? (EVIE *shrugs her*

shoulders. He turns away to the window.) It's started to rain.

EVIE: Yes.

(*There is a pause. Suddenly* JOHN *crosses to the door, and flings it open.*)

JOHN: Hullo, dad!

BALDWIN (*coming in, followed by* MARTHA): How are you, my boy? (*He shakes hands with* JOHN.) Evie! (*He kisses her.*)

MARTHA: You are sure your shoes aren't wet, Robert?

BALDWIN (*shaking his head*): I took the car. Not a drop on me. See?

(*He passes his hands over his sleeves. He goes to a chair: sits. There is an awkward pause.*)

JOHN: Well, dad? Don't you think it's about time you told us something?

BALDWIN: Told you something? I don't understand, John.

JOHN: People have been talking about you—saying things——

BALDWIN: What kind of things, John?

JOHN: You can imagine: rotten things. And I couldn't contradict them.

BALDWIN: Why not, John?

JOHN: Because I didn't know.

BALDWIN: Did you *have* to know? Wasn't it enough that you knew your father?

JOHN (*after a pause*): I beg your pardon, sir.

BALDWIN: It was two days before the smash-up that I found out what Gresham was doing. (*He pauses. They are listening intently.*) I told him he would have to make good. He said he couldn't——

EVIE (*as he does not continue*): And what happened?

BALDWIN: I told him he would have to do the best he could—and

the first step would be to close the bank. He didn't want to do that.

MARTHA: But he did it.

BALDWIN: I made him do it. He was angry—very angry, but I had the whip hand.

EVIE: The papers didn't mention that.

BALDWIN: I didn't think it was necessary to tell them.

MARTHA: But you let your name rest under a cloud meanwhile.

BALDWIN: It will be cleared to-morrow, won't it? (*He pauses.*) To-day Gresham sent for me. The trial begins in twenty-four hours. I'm the only witness against him. He asked—you can guess what——

JOHN (*indignantly*): He wanted you to lie to save his skin, eh? Wanted you to perjure yourself?

BALDWIN: That wouldn't be necessary, John. He just wanted me to have an attack of poor memory. If I tell all I know, John Gresham will go to jail—no power on earth can save him from it. But he wants me to forget a little—just the essential things. When they question me I can answer, "I don't remember." They can't prove I *do* remember. And there you are.

JOHN: It would be a lie, dad!

BALDWIN (*smiling*): Of course. But it's done every day. And they couldn't touch *me*—any more than they could convict him.

MARTHA (*quivering with indignation*): How dared he—how dared he ask such a thing——!

EVIE: What did you say, father?

BALDWIN (*smiling, and raising his eyes to* JOHN'S): Well, son, what would *you* have said?

JOHN: I'd have told him to go to the devil!

BALDWIN (*nodding*): I did.

JOHN: Bully for you, governor!

MARTHA (*half to herself*): I knew! I knew!

BALDWIN: I didn't use your words, John. He's too old a friend of mine for that. But I didn't mince matters any. He understood what I meant.

EVIE: And what did he say then?

BALDWIN: There wasn't much to say. You see, he wasn't surprised. He's known me for thirty-five years, and, well (*with simple pride*) anybody who's known me for thirty-five years doesn't expect me to haggle with my conscience. If it had been anybody else than John Gresham I would have struck him across the face. But John Gresham and I were boys together. We worked side by side. And I've been in his employ ever since he started in for himself. He is desperate—he doesn't know what he is doing—or he wouldn't have offered me money.

JOHN (*furious*): Offered you money, dad?

BALDWIN: He'd put it aside, ready for the emergency. If they don't convict him, he'll hand it over to me. The law can't stop him. But if I live until to-morrow night, they *will* convict him! (*He sighs.*) God knows I want no share in bringing about his punishment—— (*He breaks off.* EVIE *pats his hand silently.*) Young man and old man, I've worked with him or for him the best part of my life. I'm loyal to him—I've always been loyal to him—but when John Gresham ceases to be an honest man, John Gresham and I part company!

MARTHA (*weeping softly*): Robert! Robert!

BALDWIN: I've got only a few years to live, but I'll live those as I've lived the rest of my life. I'll go to my grave clean! (*He rises presently, goes to the window, and looks out.*) The rain's stopped, hasn't it?

EVIE (*following him and taking his hand*): Yes, father.

BALDWIN: It'll be a fine day to-morrow.

(*There is a pause.*)

JOHN: Dad.

BALDWIN: Yes?

JOHN: What did Gresham offer you?

BALDWIN (*simply*): A hundred thousand dollars.

EVIE: What?!

MARTHA: Robert!

BALDWIN: He put it aside for me without anybody knowing it. It's out of his private fortune, he says. It's not the depositors' money—as if that made any difference.

EVIE (*as if hypnotized*): He offered you a hundred thousand dollars.

BALDWIN (*smiling at her amazement*): I could have had it for the one word "Yes"—or even for nodding my head—or a look of the eyes.

JOHN: How—how do you know he meant it?

BALDWIN: His word is good.

JOHN: Even now?

BALDWIN: He never lied to me, John. (*He pauses.*) I suppose my eyes must have shown something I didn't feel. He noticed it. He unlocked a drawer and *showed* me the hundred thousand.

JOHN: In cash?

BALDWIN: In thousand-dollar bills. They were genuine: I examined them.

EVIE (*slowly*): And for that he wants you to say, "I don't remember."

BALDWIN (*smiling*): Just that: three words only.

JOHN: But you won't?

BALDWIN (*shaking his head*): Those three words would choke me if I tried to speak them. For some other man, perhaps, it would be easy. But for me? All of my past would rise up and strike me in the face. It would mean to the world that for years I had been living a lie: that I was not the honorable man I thought I was. When John Gresham offered me money, I was angry.

But when I rejected it, and he showed no surprise, then I was pleased. It was a compliment, don't you think so?

JOHN (*slowly*): Rather an expensive compliment.

BALDWIN: Eh?

JOHN: A compliment which cost you a hundred thousand dollars.

BALDWIN: A compliment which was *worth* a hundred thousand dollars. I've never had that much money to spend in my life, John, but if I had I couldn't imagine a finer way to spend it.

JOHN (*slowly*): Yes. I suppose so.

MARTHA (*after a pause*): Will the depositors lose much, Robert?

BALDWIN (*emphatically*): The depositors will not lose a cent.

EVIE (*surprised*): But the papers said——

BALDWIN (*interrupting*): They had to print something: they guessed. *I* know. *I* tell you.

MARTHA: But you never said so before.

BALDWIN: I left that for Gresham. It will come out to-morrow.

JOHN: Why to-morrow? Why didn't you say so before? The papers asked you often enough.

BALDWIN: Nothing forced me to answer, John.

JOHN: That wasn't your real reason, was it, dad? You knew the papers would keep right on calling you names. (BALDWIN *does not answer.* JOHN'S *face lights up with sudden understanding.*) You wanted to let Gresham announce it himself: because it will be something in his favor! Eh?

BALDWIN: Yes. . . . We were able to save something from the wreck, Gresham and I. It was more than I had expected—almost twice as much—and with what Gresham has it will be enough.

EVIE: Even without the hundred thousand?

(BALDWIN *does not answer.*)

JOHN (*insistently*): Without the money that Gresham had put away for you?

BALDWIN: Yes. I didn't know there *was* the hundred thousand until to-day. Gresham didn't tell me. We reckoned without it.

EVIE: Oh!

JOHN: And you made both ends meet?

BALDWIN: Quite easily. (*He smiles.*) Marshall is running the reorganization; Marshall of the Third National. He hasn't the least idea that it's going to turn out so well.

(*There is a pause.*)

JOHN: They're going to punish Gresham, aren't they?

BALDWIN: I'm afraid so.

JOHN: What for?

BALDWIN: Misappropriating the funds of the——

JOHN (*interrupting*): Oh, I know that. But what *crime* has he committed?

BALDWIN: That's a crime, John.

EVIE: But if nobody loses anything by it?

BALDWIN: It's a crime nevertheless.

JOHN: And they're going to *punish* him for it!

BALDWIN: They can't let him go, John. He's too conspicuous.

JOHN: Do you think that's right, governor?

BALDWIN: *My* opinion doesn't matter, John.

JOHN: But what do you think?

BALDWIN: I think—I think that I'm sorry for John Gresham—terribly sorry.

JOHN (*slowly*): It's nothing but a technicality, dad. Nobody loses a cent. It's rather hard on Gresham, I say.

BALDWIN (*after a pause*): Yes, John.

EVIE (*timidly*): Would it be such an awful thing, father, if you let him off?

BALDWIN (*smiling*): I wish I could, Evie. But I'm not the judge.

EVIE: No, but——

BALDWIN: But what?

EVIE: You're the only witness against him.

BALDWIN (*nonplussed*): Evie!

JOHN: She's right, governor.

BALDWIN: You too, John?

JOHN: It's going to be a nasty mess if they put John Gresham in jail—with your own son named after him! It's going to be pleasant for *me!* John Gresham Baldwin!

MARTHA (*after a pause*): Robert, I'm not sure I understood what you said before. What did Mr. Gresham want you to do for him?

BALDWIN: Get him off to-morrow.

MARTHA: You could do that?

BALDWIN: Yes.

MARTHA: How?

BALDWIN: By answering, "I don't remember" when they ask me dangerous questions.

MARTHA: Oh! And you *do* remember?

BALDWIN: Yes. Nearly everything.

JOHN: No matter what they ask you?

BALDWIN: I can always refresh my memory. You see, I have notes.

JOHN: But without those notes you wouldn't remember?

BALDWIN: What do you mean, John?

JOHN (*without answering*): As a matter of fact, you will have to rely on your notes nearly altogether, won't you?

BALDWIN: Everybody else does the same thing.

JOHN: Then it won't be far from the truth if you say, "I don't remember?"

MARTHA: I don't see that Mr. Gresham is asking so much of you.

BALDWIN: Martha!

MARTHA: Robert, I'm as honorable as you are——

BALDWIN: That goes without saying, Martha.

MARTHA: It doesn't seem right to me to send an old friend to jail. (*As he speaks she holds up her hand.*) Now don't interrupt me! I've been thinking. The day John was baptized: when Mr. Gresham stood sponsor for him: how proud we were! And when we came home from the church you said—do you remember what you said, Robert?

BALDWIN: No. What was it?

MARTHA: You said, "Martha, may our son always live up to the name which we have given him!" Do you remember that?

BALDWIN: Yes—dimly.

JOHN: Ha! Only *dimly,* governor?

BALDWIN: What do you mean, John?

MARTHA (*giving* JOHN *no opportunity to answer*): It would be sad—very sad—if the name of John Gresham, our son's name, should come to grief through you, Robert.

BALDWIN (*after a pause*): Martha, are you telling me to accept the bribe money that John Gresham offered me?

EVIE: Why do you call it bribe money, father?

BALDWIN (*bitterly*): Why indeed? Gresham had a prettier name for it. He said that he had underpaid me all these years. You know, I was getting only sixty dollars a week when the crash came——

JOHN (*impatiently*): Yes, yes?

BALDWIN: He said a hundred thousand represented the difference between what he had paid me and what I had actually been worth to him.

MARTHA: That's no less than true, Robert. You've worked for him very faithfully.

BALDWIN: He said that if he had paid me what he should have, I would have put by more than a hundred thousand by now.

JOHN: That's so, isn't it, dad?

BALDWIN: Who knows? I never asked him to raise my salary. When he raised it it was of his own accord. (*There is a pause. He looks around.*) Well, what do you think of it, Evie?

EVIE (*hesitantly*): If you go on the stand to-morrow——

BALDWIN: Yes?

EVIE: And they put John Gresham in jail, what will people say?

BALDWIN: They will say I have done my duty, Evie; no more and no less.

EVIE: *Will* they?

BALDWIN: Why, what should they say?

EVIE: *I* don't think so, of course, but other people might say that you had turned traitor to your best friend.

BALDWIN: You don't mean that, Evie?

EVIE: When they find out that they haven't lost any money—when John Gresham tells them that he will pay back every cent—then they won't *want* him to go to jail. They'll feel sorry for him.

BALDWIN: Yes, I believe that. I hope so.

JOHN: And they won't feel too kindly disposed toward the man who helps put him in jail.

MARTHA: They'll say you went back on an old friend, Robert.

JOHN: When you pull out your notes in court, to be *sure* of sending him to jail——!

(*He breaks off with a snort.*)

EVIE: And Mr. Gresham hasn't done anything really wrong.

JOHN: It's a technicality, that's what it is. Nobody loses a cent. Nobody wants to see him punished.

EVIE: Except you, father.

JOHN: Yes. And you're willing to jail the man after whom you named your son!

MARTHA (*after a pause*): I believe in being merciful, Robert.

BALDWIN: Merciful?

MARTHA: Mr. Gresham has always been very good to you.

(*There is another pause. Curiously enough, they do not seem to be able to meet each other's eyes.*)

MARTHA: Ah, well! What are you going to do now, Robert?

BALDWIN: What do you mean?

MARTHA: You have been out of work since the bank closed.

BALDWIN (*shrugging his shoulders*): Oh, I'll find a position.

MARTHA (*shaking her head*): At your age——?

BALDWIN: It's the *man* that counts.

MARTHA: Yes. You said that a month ago.

JOHN: I heard from Donovan——

BALDWIN (*quickly*): What did you hear?

JOHN: He's gone with the Third National, you know.

BALDWIN: Yes; he's helping with the reorganization.

JOHN: They wouldn't take you on there——

BALDWIN: Their staff was full. They couldn't very well offer me a position as a clerk.

JOHN: That was what they told *you*.

BALDWIN: Wasn't it true?

JOHN (*shakes his head*): Marshall said he wouldn't employ a man who was just as guilty as John Gresham.

BALDWIN: But I'm not!

JOHN: Who knows it?

BALDWIN: Everybody will to-morrow!

JOHN: Will they believe you? Or will they think you're trying to save your *own* skin?

BALDWIN: I found out only a day before the smash.

JOHN: Who will believe that?

BALDWIN: They will *have* to!

JOHN: How will you make them? I'm afraid you'll find that against you wherever you go, governor. Your testifying against John Gresham won't make things any better. If you ever get another job, it will be with *him!* (*This is a startling idea to* BALDWIN, *who shows his surprise.*) If Gresham doesn't go to jail, he'll start in business again, won't he? And he can't offer you anything less than a partnership.

BALDWIN: A partnership?

JOHN (*with meaning*): With the hundred thousand capital you could put in the business, dad.

BALDWIN: John!

JOHN: Of course, the capital doesn't matter. He'll owe you quite a debt of gratitude besides.

(*There is a pause.*)

MARTHA: A hundred thousand would mean a great deal to us, Robert. If you don't find a position soon John will have to support us.

JOHN: On thirty dollars a week, dad.

EVIE: That won't go very far.

MARTHA: It's not fair to John.

JOHN (*angrily*): Oh, don't bother about *me.*

(EVIE *begins to weep.*)

JOHN: Look here, governor, you've said nothing to the papers. If

you say nothing more to-morrow what does it amount to but sticking to your friend? It's the square thing to do—he'd do as much for you.

BALDWIN (*looks appealingly from one face to another. They are averted. Then*): You—you want me to take this money? (*There is no answer.*) Say "Yes," one of you. (*Still no answer.*) Or "No." (*A long pause. Finally.*) I couldn't go into partnership with Gresham.

MARTHA (*promptly*): Why not?

BALDWIN: People wouldn't trust him.

JOHN: Then you could go into business with someone else, dad. A hundred thousand is a lot of money.

BALDWIN (*walks to the window. Looks out*): God knows I never thought this day would come! I know—I know no matter how you try to excuse it—I know that if I take this money I do a dishonorable thing. And you know it! You, and you, and you! All of you! Come, admit it!

JOHN (*resolutely*): Nobody'll ever hear of it.

BALDWIN: But amongst ourselves, John! Whatever we are to the world, let us be honest with each other, the four of us! Well? (*His glance travels from* JOHN *to* EVIE, *whose head is bowed; from her to his wife, who is apparently busied with her knitting. He raises* MARTHA'S *head: looks into the eyes. He shudders.*) Shams! Liars! Hypocrites! Thieves! And I no better than any of you! We have seen our souls naked, and they stink to Almighty Heaven! Well, why don't you answer me?

MARTHA (*feebly*): It's not wrong, Robert.

BALDWIN: It's not right.

JOHN (*facing him steadily*): A hundred thousand is a lot of money, dad.

BALDWIN (*nodding slowly*): You can look into my eyes *now,* my son, can't you?

JOHN (*without moving*): Dad, why did you refuse? Wasn't it because you were afraid of what *we'd* say?

BALDWIN (*after a long pause*): Yes, John.

JOHN: Well, nobody will ever know it.

BALDWIN: Except the four of us.

JOHN: Yes—father.

(*Abruptly they separate.* EVIE *weeps in silence.* MARTHA, *being less emotional, blows her nose noisily, and fumbles with her knitting.* JOHN, *having nothing better to do, scowls out of the window, and* BALDWIN, *near the fireplace, clenches and unclenches his hands.*)

JOHN: Someone's coming.

MARTHA (*raising her head*): Who is it?

JOHN: I can't see. (*With sudden apprehension.*) It looks like Marshall.

BALDWIN: Marshall?

(*The door-bell rings. They are motionless as a* MAID *enters at one side and goes out the other. The* MAID *re-enters.*)

THE MAID: A gentleman to see you, sir.

BALDWIN (*pulling himself together*): Who, me?

THE MAID: Yes, sir.

(*She hands him a card on a salver.*)

BALDWIN: It *is* Marshall.

MARTHA: The President of the Third National?

BALDWIN: Yes. What does he want here?

THE MAID: Shall I show him in, sir?

BALDWIN: Yes. Yes. By all means.

(*The* MAID *goes out.*)

MARTHA (*crossing to him quickly*): Robert! Be careful of what you say: you're to go on the stand to-morrow.

BALDWIN (*nervously*): Yes, yes. I'll look out.

(*The* MAID *re-enters, opening the door for* MARSHALL.)

MARSHALL (*coming into the room very buoyantly*): Well, well, spending the afternoon indoors? How are you, Mrs. Baldwin? (*He shakes hands cordially.*) And you, Baldwin?

MARTHA: We were just going out. Come, Evie.

MARSHALL: Oh, you needn't go on my account. You can hear what I have to say. (*He turns to the head of the family.*) Baldwin, if you feel like coming around to the Third National some time this week, you'll find a position waiting for you.

BALDWIN (*thunderstruck*): Do you mean that, Mr. Marshall?

MARSHALL (*smiling*): I wouldn't say it if I didn't. (*He continues more seriously.*) I was in to see Gresham this afternoon. He told me about the offer he had made you. But he knew that no amount of money would make you do something you thought wrong. Baldwin, he paid you the supreme compliment: rather than go to trial with you to testify against him, he confessed.

BALDWIN (*sinking into a chair*): Confessed!

MARSHALL: Told the whole story. (*He turns to* MARTHA.) I can only say to you what every man will be saying to-morrow: how highly I honor and respect your husband! How sincerely——

MARTHA (*seizing his hand piteously*): Please! Please! Can't you see he's crying?

THE CURTAIN FALLS SLOWLY

WHAT MEN LIVE BY*

A DRAMATIZATION

BY

VIRGINIA CHURCH

OF

The Story by Leo Tolstoi

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CHARACTERS

SIMON, *the cobbler*
MATRENA, *his wife*
MICHAEL, *his apprentice*
BARON AVEDEITCH, *a wealthy landowner*
THEDKA, *his footman*
SONIA IVANICH, *a lady of means*
BRENIE, NIKITA } *Her two adopted children, little girls of about six years*
ANNA MALOSKA, *a widow, friend of Matrena*
TROFINOFF, *a debtor*
THE GUARDIAN ANGEL
A LITTLE DEVIL

WHAT MEN LIVE BY

About four feet below the level of the street, which is reached by a few stairs at the back leading to an outer door, is the basement occupied by SIMON. *At the right of the door, on a line with the pavement, is a long narrow window through which one may see the feet of the passers-by.* SIMON, *who does most of the cobbling for the village, knows the wayfarers by the boots which he has repaired. Under the window, placed so as to catch the meagre light, is a cobbler's bench with tools on either side. At the left of the stairs are long gray curtains forming a kind of closet in which outer wraps are hung. In the corner is a small china-closet. In the left wall is a hearth; here, over the fire, the wife cooks the meals. Two old chairs huddle near the fire as if for warmth. A table, half concealed by a worn cloth, stands near the fireplace. Opposite the fireplace is a door leading into the inner room.*

SCENE I

SIMON, *old, slow in movement, kindly of feature, is seated at his bench, mending a pair of rough hide shoes. His wife,* MATRENA, *as brown and dry as a chip, is on a stool by the fire, mending a tattered old sheep-skin outer coat. Occasionally one sees the feet of pedestrians pass by the little window.* SIMON *glances up as they throw a shadow on his table.*

MATRENA: And who was that went by, Simon?

SIMON: It was Thedka, my dear Matrena. Thedka, the footman of the Barina. The side-patch on his boot has lasted well.

MATRENA: Yes, you make them last for so long that they do not need to come to you and so you have little trade.

SIMON: But, Matrena, I could not put on patches that would not last; then I should have no trade at all. I must do my best. That is the kind of man I am.

MATRENA: Yes, yes, Simon, that is the kind of man you are and so this is the kind of home we have, with hardly enough flour in the bin for one baking.

SIMON: Don't fret, Matrena. We shall not starve. God is good.

MATRENA: Aye, God is good, but his handmen are far from the likeness in which He cast them. (*A girl trips by.*) Was that Rozinka went by?

SIMON: No, Rozinka has not such high heels. It was Ulka, the Barina's maid.

MATRENA: I might have guessed it, after Thedka had passed. The minx is as hard on his footsteps as a man's shadow on a sunny day. It's a pity since you shoe all the servants in the Baron's household that the master would not let you make boots for him.

SIMON: The boots of the nobilities are brought from Paris, and are cut from northern leather. Trofinoff told me he brought five pair from the station on his last trip.

MATRENA: Trofinoff, hum! Did you not tell me Trofinoff promised to come this afternoon to pay the eight roubles he has owed you three years coming Michaelmas?

SIMON: Aye, so he said.

MATRENA: So he said, but I'll warrant we never see a hair of his beard till he's come barefoot again. Now (*holding up the sheepskin*), I've done all I can to your sheepskin. It's so thin the cold doesn't have to see the holes to creep in: it walks through. It's thankful I'll be when we can buy another skin so that I can get out of the house the same time you go.

SIMON: We'll buy a skin this afternoon, my dear. When Trofinoff brings me the eight roubles, we shall add it to the three you have saved and that ought to buy a good skin—if not a tanned one, at all events, a good rough one.

MATRENA: *If* Trofinoff brings the money.

SIMON: He'll bring it, or by heaven, I'll have the cap off his head, so I will. That is the kind of man I am.

MATRENA: If he were to come in and tell you he is hard up, you would tell him not to worry his head about the roubles, that God is good.

SIMON: No, I shall say, "Am I not hard up as well?"

MATRENA: Very well, if he comes we shall see what kind of a man you are. Who was that?

SIMON: It was your friend, Anna Maloska, who wears shoes too small for her.

MATRENA: She wore large shoes after she caught her husband; but now he is dead, she wears small shoes again to catch another.

SIMON: I wonder that she did not stop.

MATRENA: She will stop on her way back from market for there will be more news.

SIMON (*looking out the window and rising happily*): But see here, Matrena, you wronged the good Trofinoff. He has come to pay the eight roubles as he promised. (*There is a halting knock at the door.*) Coming! Coming! (*He limps slightly as he hastens up the steps.*)

MATRENA (*as she crosses to go into the room at the right*): Well, Simon, I shall be the last to be sorry if your faith has been rewarded.

(*She goes out as* SIMON *opens a door to the street. He comes down with* TROFINOFF, *a middle-aged, sharp-faced little man with gray beard and keen roving eyes. He carries a bundle wrapped in brown cloth.*)

SIMON: Welcome, Trofinoff, I salute you.

TROFINOFF: Welcome, fellow-brother. I wish you every thing that is good.

SIMON: I thank you, brother. Is all well at home?

TROFINOFF: Not as well as might be, alas. Fuel takes much money these days. I have a flat purse.

SIMON: Then it was doubly good of you, friend Trofinoff, to come to settle our account. My good wife has not a kaftan or a sheepskin to wear when it snows.

TROFINOFF: I regret, Simon, I was unable to bring you the roubles I owed you. I am so hard pressed.

SIMON (*with forced sternness*): Am I not hard up as well?

TROFINOFF: Aye, but you have not so many mouths to fill, nor cattle to feed, nor grain to dispose of with little profit.

SIMON: Friend Trofinoff, you have a hut and cattle, while I have all on my back. You grow your own bread; I have to buy mine. If you do not pay me, I shall not have money for bread.

TROFINOFF: You are not so grieved as I, brother, and had it been anyone but you I should not have dared face him, but I knew the kind of man you were. I have heard you say, "Let us love one another."

SIMON: That is so, for love is of God.

TROFINOFF: So I said to my wife: "Anya, if it were anyone but Simon, the good Simon, I would not dare take him our little one's shoes, but I know what kind of man he is: he loves the children and would not that the least of these should suffer and he could help it." (*He unwraps a tattered pair of shoes, belonging to a child.*)

SIMON: Aye, the little Sarah's shoes. They need soles badly and a toe cap.

TROFINOFF: You will repair them for her, Simon?

SIMON: Of course, brother, I—— (*He looks nervously toward the door to the inner room.*) Could you not pay me something, Trofinoff?

TROFINOFF: Here are two kopecks. They will buy a half loaf for the wife, Simon. (*He goes to the door.*)

SIMON: Thank you.

TROFINOFF: And you shall have your roubles in a day or so as soon as my grain is paid for.

SIMON: I can get along very comfortably. While one of us has a warm coat, why should we fret? I can stay in by the fire. Only, of course, there's my wife. She keeps worrying about it.

TROFINOFF: Your wife has no cause to be anxious while she has such a kind husband, Simon. I will send for the boots shortly. Good-day.

SIMON: Good-day. God be with you, brother.

(TROFINOFF *goes out.* SIMON *lays the kopecks on the bench, and is examining the small shoes when* MATRENA *enters. He puts them behind his back guiltily.*)

MATRENA: Well, what are you hiding there? Did he bring you a gift with your money?

SIMON (*sadly*): No, he—he assured me, he was quite destitute.

MATRENA (*enraged*): Do you mean he brought you not even your eight roubles? (SIMON *shakes his head.*) What did I tell you, eh?

SIMON: But he says he will bring them soon—when his money comes in. I railed at him, Matrena. I scored him roundly for not paying his just dues.

MATRENA: And what have you there? (SIMON *produces the shoes and* MATRENA *is further enraged.*) I thought as much. You've taken more work for the cheater. You let him hoodwink you out of your senses while your old wife may go hungry and cold. What's this?

SIMON: He gave me two kopecks for bread.

(MATRENA *hurls them angrily on the floor at* SIMON'S *feet. The old man patiently picks them up.*)

MATRENA: Bread, bah! It would not buy half a loaf. The thief! It is a shame, a shame.

(*She rocks herself, crying, then falls into a chair by*

the fire, her apron thrown over her head and gives way to grief.)

SIMON (*distressed*): Come now, Matrena, why will you wag your tongue so foolishly? If we have bread for the day, the morrow will provide for itself. As for the coat, I shall go to Vanya, the vender of skins, and get one on credit.

(*The* LITTLE DEVIL *peers in at the window, then disappears.*)

MATRENA: And who would give the likes of us credit with not a dessiatin of land to our share?

SIMON (*putting the shoes on the bench and preparing for outdoors*): Vanya will. I have bought many skins from him for my shoes. I have favored him in his turn.

MATRENA: Men forget past favors in the face of present desires. But if you are going out, you had better put my woolen jacket under your kaftan. The wind is bitter cold to-day.

(*She goes to the curtains to the left of the stairs and takes down a close-fitting woolen sack. From a shelf of the cupboard, she lifts a jar and shakes into her hand some money.* SIMON *is drawing on woolen slippers over his shoes. He puts on* MATRENA'S *jacket, a woolen kaftan or smock over it, and throws the sheepskin about his shoulders. On his bald head he draws down a fur cap.*)

SIMON (*submitting to* MATRENA'S *ministrations*): Thank you, Matrena, I shall feel quite warm in this old sheepskin. I shan't want a new one in a lifetime. (*He goes up the steps.*)

MATRENA: You won't get one, the way you conduct your business. Now, Simon, here are our three roubles, give these to Vanya on account and he should then let you have the skin.

SIMON: He will, wife, he will.

MATRENA: Now go, and mind you do not stop for vodka on the way —your tongue is loose enough as it is. And do not talk aloud

to yourself as is your custom, for if a thief learn you have the roubles, he will not be above killing you for them.

SIMON: God is my protection. May his good angel guard our house in my absence! Good-day, Matrena!

MATRENA: Good-day, Simon!

(*He goes out, closing the door. She looks after him affectionately, then goes to the closet and taking an iron pot from the shelf hangs it before the fire. Seeing that all is well, she crosses and goes into the inner room. The basement is but dimly lighted. The* LITTLE DEVIL, *after peering into the window to see that the coast is clear, comes in from the street, closing the door after him. He moves quickly and is merry as though about to reap some reward for his efforts. From out the curtains by the stairs, steps the figure of* THE GUARDIAN ANGEL *in long flowing garments. The* ANGEL *remains in the shadows and is never clearly visible.*)

ANGEL: Why are you here?

(*The* DEVIL *goes to the hearth and sits in front of the fire. He shows no surprise at being spoken to by the* ANGEL, *and does not look in his direction as he answers.*)

DEVIL: To try my luck to see if I can win old Simon with my dice. He has begun to ask credit and if he stops for vodka, as I shall see that he does, that will be one more step in my direction.

ANGEL: His faith is strong.

DEVIL: So are my dice, ha! ha! (*He throws them.*) Three, six, nine! Good! The three means that he will have a little luck: it will make him drink vodka and forget his wife. Six, he will prosper, and when a man prospers in *this* world he forgets the next. Nine, nine, that is not so well. Nine means that I shall get him—if—yet "if's" are so little in my way. So I shall get him, unless——

ANGEL: Unless?

DEVIL (*rising*): Unless a greater than thou come into his home to protect him.

ANGEL: I am his Guardian Angel.

DEVIL (*on the stairs*): I shall make the roubles jingle in his pockets so that he shall not hear the voice of the Guardian Angel. If nine had been twelve—but we shall see. I am off now to the home of the Baron, who long ago drowned the voice of his angel in vodka. I mixed his first glass. There was fox's blood to make him grow cunning, wolf's blood to make him grow cruel, and swine's blood to turn him into a pig. On my way, I shall mix a glass for Simon, to bring up in him all the beast blood there is.

ANGEL: His faith is great.

(*The* DEVIL *laughs derisively as he goes out and slams the door, and the* ANGEL *disappears again in the shadows. Feet go by the window and voices are heard. Then just as* MATRENA *comes in and goes to the fire, there is a knock.*)

MATRENA: Come in.

(*A comely woman of middle age enters. She is rather overdressed in poor clothes that strive to imitate the rich. It is* ANNA MALOSKA.)

MATRENA: Ah, Anna Maloska, is it you? I thought I had the odor of smoke and I came to tend our fire. Come in.

ANNA (*sniffing*): It smells like sulphur. That's bad luck. Who was it went out?

MATRENA: No one. Sit down. Simon has gone to buy a sheepskin. Is it cold out?

ANNA (*sitting and throwing back her wraps*): Bitter cold. It was on just such a day my poor husband caught pneumonia.

MATRENA (*sitting on the other side of the fire and tending the porridge*): I do hope Simon won't catch cold and I do hope the

sheepskin seller won't cheat him. That man of mine is a regular simpleton.

ANNA (*patting her hair*): They are all, poor dears.

MATRENA: Simon never cheats a soul himself, yet a little child can lead him by the nose. It's time he was back; he had no way to go.

ANNA: If it were poor dear Ivan, I should know he had stopped for a glass of vodka.

MATRENA (*walking to the window and looking out*): I hope he hasn't gone making merry, that rascal of mine.

ANNA: Ah, Matrena, they are all rascals. Ivan drank himself into a drunken stupor every evening; then he would come home and beat me, and beat little Fifi, my dog, but I have to remember that he was a man and men are like that. I shall never be happy again, now that he is in his grave. (*She weeps.*)

MATRENA (*patting her shoulder*): There, there, poor Anna!

ANNA (*brightening*): Do you like my hat?

MATRENA: Aye, aye, it is very tasty; though if I might say, a trifle youthful.

ANNA: Why shouldn't a woman cheat Father Time if she can? He's the only man she can get even with. He liked my hat.

MATRENA: Ivan?

ANNA: Oh, no, the poor dear died without seeing it. I mean Martin Pakhom. I just met him at the door and he said, "Good-day, Anna, what a beautiful hat that is you're wearing."

MATRENA: They say Martin drinks like a trout.

ANNA: Ah, they all do, poor dears. (*Gathering up her basket.*) I must go on. Fifi will be wanting his supper, though neither of us have eaten anything since poor Ivan died. Fifi is so affectionate. We both cry an hour every morning. Sonka times us.

MATRENA: Poor Anna!

ANNA: Won't you walk a way with me?

MATRENA: Simon went out with all our clothes upon him and left me nothing to wear. Besides, I must have his supper ready, and clean out my sleeping-room.

ANNA (*at the stairs*): I wish *I* had some one to get supper for. (*She goes up to the door.*) Matrena, Martin said something rather pointed just now.

MATRENA: What did he say, Anna?

ANNA: He said, "Marriage is a lottery!"

MATRENA: Aye, aye, so it is.

ANNA: I was just wondering——

MATRENA: Yes?

ANNA: I was wondering if Martin were thinking of taking a chance. Good-by, Matrena.

MATRENA: Good-by, Anna.

(ANNA *goes out.* MATRENA, *stirring her porridge, sits near the fire. The feet of two men pass the window. They belong to* SIMON *and a stranger. The men enter. The stranger is a young man, tall and slender, with fine clear-cut features and a mild gentle expression. He is without stockings, being clad in* SIMON'S *woolen slippers and kaftan. He stands hesitating at the foot of the steps.* MATRENA *has risen and regards the two men angrily.* "What tramp is this now, Simon has brought home?" *she is wondering. The old man approaches his wife fearfully.*)

SIMON: Well, Matrena, here we are home again. (MATRENA, *after a scathing glance, turns her back on him, and tends her fire.*) We have brought our appetites with us. Get us some supper, will you? (*He takes off his sheepskin and cap, but still* MATRENA *does not respond. He motions the stranger to a chair at the right.*) Sit down, brother, and we will have some supper. Have you anything cooked that you could give us?

MATRENA (*facing him in rage*): Yes, I have something cooked, but not for you. I can see you have drunk your senses away. (*As he starts to protest.*) Do you think I cannot smell your breath? Where is our sheepskin? Did you drink up all the three roubles?

(SIMON *goes to the stranger and reaching in the pocket of the kaftan takes out the roubles.*)

SIMON: No, Matrena, I did not get the sheepskin because the vender would not let me have one unless I brought all the money. "Bring all the cash," he said, "and then you can pick what skin you like. We all of us know how difficult it is to get quit of a debt." But here are your roubles; I only spent the two kopecks for the merest drop to send the blood bubbling finely in my veins.

MATRENA (*eyeing the man*): I have no supper for a pair of drunkards like you. One cannot feed every drunkard that comes along when one has not enough in the pot for two.

SIMON: Hold your tongue, Matrena. Give me time to explain.

MATRENA: How much sense am I likely to hear from a drunken fool, indeed! My mother gave me some linen—and you drank it away! You go out to buy a sheepskin and drink that away, too.

SIMON: But I did not——

MATRENA (*beside herself with rage*): Give me my jacket! It's the only one I have, yet you sneak it off while I stay home for lack of clothes. (*As she snatches off the jacket and starts to the other room, her anger is burning off.*) You, you haven't told me who this fellow is.

SIMON: If you will give me a chance for a word, I will. I saw this man lying by the chapel yonder, half-naked and frozen. It is not summer time, you must remember. God led me to him, else he must have perished. The Baron Avedeitch drove up and I thought he would stop but he did not. I started on, saying to myself the man could be up to no good there and if I went back I might be robbed and murdered. Then, I said, "Fie, Simon, for shame! would you let a man die for want of clothing and

food at your very door?" What could I do? I shared with him my covering and brought him here. Calm your temper, Matrena, for to give way to it is sinful. Remember we would all die, were it not for God.

(MATRENA *turns back from the door, sets a teapot on the table and pours some kvass, laying knives and forks by the places and serving the porridge.*)

MATRENA: Here is kvass and porridge. There is no bread. (*They eat humbly.* MATRENA *stops before the stranger.*) What is your name?

MICHAEL (*lifting his serious eyes to her face*): Michael.

MATRENA: Where do you come from?

MICHAEL: From another part than this.

MATRENA: How did you come to the chapel?

MICHAEL: I cannot say.

MATRENA: Some one must have assaulted you then?

MICHAEL: No, no one assaulted me. God was punishing me.

SIMON: Of course, all things come of God. Yet where were you bound for?

MICHAEL: For nowhere in particular.

SIMON: Do you know any trade?

MICHAEL: No, none.

MATRENA (*her heart warming within her*): You could learn. I know, Simon, he could learn, if you would teach him. He might stay with us. There is enough straw for another bed in the hallway.

MICHAEL: The Lord be good to you! I was lying frozen and unclothed, when Simon saw and took compassion on me. He shared with me his clothing and brought me hither. You have given me food and drink and shown me great kindness.

MATRENA: No, I was not kind. I am ashamed of myself. (*She*

goes to the cupboard and brings out the one bit of bread.) There is one crust and you shall have half.

MICHAEL: But you?

MATRENA (*gently*): Eat, we shall have enough. You are welcome to stay with us as long as you wish. (MICHAEL *turns and smiles radiantly on her.*) Let us eat.

MICHAEL: God's blessing on this house.

SCENE II

There is an air of greater prosperity than before. The cobbler's bench is new. There are flowers in the window-box and on the mantel. It is spring outside. The sound of hammering is heard within. The outer door opens and MATRENA *enters with* ANNA MALOSKA. *The two women have been to market.* MATRENA *is well, though quietly dressed;* ANNA, *as usual, in bright colors.*

MATRENA: Come in, Anna.

ANNA: The men are not here. I wished to ask Simon about my shoes.

MATRENA: They are inside, building another room. We have needed it since Michael came. Michael made the new bench.

ANNA: Michael seems to do everything well. Just like poor Ivan.

MATRENA (*enthusiastically*): Ah, he is wonderful. Everything that Simon teaches him he learns readily. The first day he learned to twine and twist the thread, no easy task for the apprentice. The third day, he was able to work as though he had been a cobbler all his life. He never makes mistakes, and eats no more than a sparrow.

(*They sit down at the table.*)

ANNA: He is woefully solemn.

MATRENA: Aye, he works all day, only resting for a moment to look upward. He never wishes to go out of doors; never jests, nor laughs. He has only smiled once; it was the night he came.

ANNA: Has he any family—a wife?

MATRENA: He never speaks of his own affairs.

ANNA: *I* should manage to worm it out of him, trust me. Martin shall have no secrets that I don't know.

MATRENA: When are you to marry, Anna?

ANNA: Next month. It will be such a relief to let down. I shan't wear these tight stays any longer, nor such close boots. I can go to breakfast in my old wrapper and curl papers. Now Martin has a way of dropping in to breakfast and I have to keep on my sleekest dress.

MATRENA: Martin was in for shoes last week.

ANNA: Yes, he says no one sews so strongly and so neatly as Michael.

MATRENA: People come to Simon from all the country around. Since Michael came his business has increased tenfold.

ANNA: Aye, Martin says the fame of Simon's apprentice has crept abroad. (*Regarding her own shoes.*) Martin has small feet. He told me last night he wore a number seven. But I must go.

MATRENA: Here comes Simon now.

(SIMON *and* MICHAEL *enter from the right. The latter is in simple workman's clothes. He bows gravely without speaking, and going to the bench bends over his work.* SIMON *approaches the women, who have risen.*)

SIMON: Ah, Anna Maloska, how fares the bride to-day?

ANNA: Well, thank you, Simon. I came to order some new shoes.

SIMON: Good, Anna. Shall we make them on the same last as before? Sixes, I believe?

ANNA: No, Simon, I wish sevens this time. Good-by, Matrena. Good-by, Simon.

SIMON and MATRENA: Farewell, Anna.

MATRENA: Come in again, Anna.

ANNA (*at the door*): Simon, are Martin's shoes finished?

SIMON: No, Anna, but don't worry; they will be. I had to send for more leather. He wears large boots, you know.

ANNA (*turning on the steps*): Large? Sevens?

SIMON: Elevens, Anna.

ANNA: Elevens, why—after all, Simon, I believe you may make my shoes nines. (*She opens the door.*)

SIMON: Very well, Anna.

ANNA (*looking out, becomes greatly excited*): Oh, Matrena, a fine gentleman in a great-coat is getting out here. He has two coachmen and a footman. I think it is the Baron. I must run out of his way. (*She disappears.* SIMON and MATRENA *look out of the window.*)

MATRENA: It is the Baron Avedeitch, isn't it, Simon?

SIMON: There is no mistaking the Baron, and he is coming here. (*The door has been left open and it is presently filled by a huge form that has to bow his great head to enter the low portal. The* BARON *has a ruddy, bibulous countenance, a neck like a bull's, and a figure of cast-iron. He straightens up just inside the door.*)

BARON (*in a loud pompous tone*): Which of you is the master boot-maker?

SIMON (*stepping aside*): I am, your honor.

BARON (*calling out the door*): Hi, Thedka! Bring me the stuff here. (*He comes down into the room, followed by the footman, who places the bundle on the table.*) Untie it. (*The footman does so, disclosing two sheets of leather. He then withdraws.* MATRENA *curtsies every time anyone looks her direction, though no one heeds her.*) Look here, bootmaker. Do you see this?

SIMON: Yes, your nobility.

BARON: Do you know what it is?

SIMON: It is good leather.

BARON (*thundering for emphasis*): Good leather, indeed! You blockhead, you have never seen such leather in your life before. It is of northern make and cost twenty roubles. Could you make me a pair of boots out of it?

SIMON: Possibly so, your honor.

BARON: "Possibly so!" Well, first, listen. I want a pair of boots that shall last a year, will never tread over, and never split at the seams. If you can make such boots, then set to work and cut out at once, but if you cannot, do neither of these things. I tell you beforehand that if the new pair should split or tread over before the year is out, I will clap you in prison.

MATRENA: Oh, your honor.

BARON (*ignoring her*): But, if they should not do so, then I will pay you ten roubles for your work.

SIMON (*turning to* MICHAEL): What do you think about it, brother?

MICHAEL: Take the work, Simon.

SIMON: Very well, sir.

BARON (*he sits and extends his foot*): Hi, Thekda.

(*The footman advances and draws off the boot. The* BARON *then motions to* SIMON. MICHAEL *has advanced.*)

BARON: Take my measure. (MICHAEL *kneels and takes the measure of the sole and of the instep. He has to fasten on an extra piece of paper to measure the calf as the muscles of the* BARON'S *leg are as thick as a beam.*) Take care you don't make them too tight in the leg. (*As* MICHAEL *draws back, the footman replaces the boot on his master's foot, then withdraws again to the door.*)

BARON (*indicating* MICHAEL): Who is this you have with you?

SIMON: That is my skilled workman who will sew your boots.

BARON (*standing and stamping into his boot*): Look you sharp, then,

and remember this—that you are to sew them so that they will last a year. (MICHAEL *does not respond but stands gazing past the* BARON *as though he saw some one back of him. His face suddenly breaks into a smile and he brightens all over. The* BARON, *irritated, glances back of him, then scowls at* MICHAEL.) What are you grinning at, you fool? I see no one back of me to grin at. You had better see that the boots are ready when I want them. (*He stalks up the steps.*)

MICHAEL: They will be ready when you need them.

(*The* BARON *goes out. The footman follows, closing the door.*)

MATRENA: What a man!

SIMON: He is as hard as a flint stone.

MATRENA: Why wouldn't he get hardened with the life he leads? Even death itself would not take such an iron rivet of a man.

SIMON (*taking the leather to* MICHAEL *at the bench*): Well, Michael, we have undertaken the work and we must take care not to go amiss over it. This leather is valuable stuff.

MATRENA: And the gentleman is short-tempered.

SIMON: Aye, there must be no mistakes. You have the sharper eyes, as well as the greatest skill in your fingers, so take these measures and cut out the stuff, while I finish sewing those toe-caps.

MICHAEL: I will make them according to your needs.

(*The men sit working while* MATRENA *busies herself with the housework.*)

MATRENA: Oh, Simon, I forgot to tell you, Sonia Ivanich is coming by to get shoes for her two little girls. The little Nikita is hard to fit, but Madame has heard that Michael can fit even a lame foot.

(MICHAEL *drops his work and leans forward.*)

MICHAEL: A lame child?

MATRENA: Yes, poor little thing—but hush, I hear the clamp, clamp of a wooden foot. Come, Simon, and greet her. Madame has money; you are getting all the best trade now.

(SIMON *puts down his work and comes forward.* MATRENA *hastens up to the door and holds it open. A gentle, good-looking lady enters with two pretty little girls. They have round wide eyes, rosy cheeks and wear smart little shawls and dresses.*)

SONIA: Good-day to you, mistress.

MATRENA: The same to you, Madame, and the young misses. Won't you sit down?

(SONIA *sits by the table, the two little girls burying their faces in her skirts from timidity. She pats them tolerantly.* MICHAEL *keeps regarding them, though he works.*)

SONIA: Thank you. Is this Master Simon?

SIMON: It is, mistress. What can we do for you?

SONIA: I wish a pair of boots made for each of these little girls to wear for the spring.

SIMON: Very well, Madame. Will you have them leather throughout or lined with linen?

SONIA: I believe linen will be softer. (*The lame child has slipped over to* MICHAEL *and he takes her on his knee.*) Well, will you see Nikita? I have never known her to take to a stranger so.

MATRENA: All the children love Michael. He is Simon's skilled workman. He will take the measures.

(MICHAEL *measures the little feet. The child pats his head.*)

NIKITA: I love you. Have you a little girl?

MICHAEL (*gently*): No, I have no little girl.

SONIA: Take both sets of measures from this little girl and make one bashmak[1] for the crooked foot and three ordinary

[1] Bashmak—boot.

ones. The two children take the same size: they are twins.

MATRENA: How came she to be lame? Such a pretty little lady.

SONIA: Her mother fell over her as she was dying.

MATRENA (*surprised*): Then you are not their mother.

SONIA: No, I adopted them. But I love them as much as though they were my own and they are as happy as the day is long; they know no difference.

SIMON: Whose children were they?

SONIA: The children of peasants. The father died on a Tuesday from the felling of a tree. The mother died that Friday, just after the twins were born. She was all alone and in her death agony she threw herself across the baby and crushed its foot. When we found her, she was stiff in death but the children were alive.

MATRENA: Poor little mother!

SONIA: I was the only one in the village with a young child, so they were given to me to nurse. God took my own little one unto Himself, but I have come to love these like my own flesh. I could not live without them. They are to me as wax is to the candle.

SIMON: It is a true saying which reads, "Without father and mother we may live, but without God—never."

(*All are drawn to look toward* MICHAEL *who, sitting with his hands folded on his knees, is gazing upward and smiling as though at some one unseen by the others.*)

SONIA (*rising*): Good-day, master. Come, Nikita, we will stop in again to try the boots.

SIMON: In seven days, mistress. We thank you.

NIKITA: Good-by, man!

MICHAEL: Good-by, little one!

SONIA: Well, I never! The little dear! (*She goes out with the children.*)

SIMON: Michael, if you will bring me the awl from the other room, I, too, will work. (*He approaches the bench as* MICHAEL *goes into the other room for the awl. He suddenly cries aloud in dismay.*) What has he done? What can ail the fellow?

MATRENA: What is it? (*She hastens to his side.*)

SIMON (*groaning*): Oh! How is it that Michael who has lived with me for a whole year without making a single mistake, should now make such a blunder as this? The Baron ordered high boots and Michael has gone and sewed a pair of soleless slippers and spoiled the leather.

MATRENA (*aghast*): Michael has done this!

SIMON: Alas, yes, and you heard what the gentleman said. I could replace an ordinary skin, but one does not see leather like this every day. (MICHAEL *returns with the awl.*) My good fellow, what have you done? You have simply ruined me! The gentleman ordered high boots, but what have you gone and made instead?

(*Before* MICHAEL *has a chance to respond, there is a loud knock at the door.*)

SIMON: Come in!

(*The door is opened and* THEDKA, *the footman of the* BARON, *enters.* SIMON *pushes the slipper back of him.*)

THEDKA: Good-day to you.

SIMON (*uneasily*): Good-day. What can we do for you?

THEDKA: My mistress sent me about the boots.

SIMON: Yes? What about them?

(MICHAEL, *unseen by the others, goes into the other room.*)

THEDKA: My master will not want them now. He is dead.

MATRENA: What are you saying!

THEDKA: He died on the way home. When we went to help him alight, he lay limp as a meal-sack on the floor of the carriage.

MATRENA: God help us!

THEDKA: My mistress sent me to tell the bootmaker to use the leather for a pair of slippers for the corpse and to make them as quickly as he can.

(MATRENA *and* SIMON *look at each other with wonderment in their eyes. They turn to where* MICHAEL *stood by the inner door, but he has disappeared.*)

SIMON: You shall have them in an hour.

THEDKA: I shall return. Good-day, my master, and good luck to you.

SIMON: And to you.

(THEDKA *goes out, leaving* SIMON *and* MATRENA *gazing at each other in awe.*)

MATRENA: Michael is no ordinary being. We might have guessed before this.

SIMON: You remember how he smiled?

MATRENA: He has smiled three times.

SIMON: Let us see what he is doing.

MATRENA: You do not suppose he would go from us without a word, do you?

(*They go into the other room. Immediately the* LITTLE DEVIL *appears in the doorway at the back and the* GUARDIAN ANGEL *is seen in the shadow of the curtains at the left.*)

ANGEL: You have lost!

DEVIL (*with a stamp of his foot*): I have lost Simon's soul, but I have the Baron. He shall be my torch this night in hell.

ANGEL: The faith of Simon was great.

DEVIL: *Thou* didst not save him!

ANGEL: One greater than I saved Simon. It was God!

(*At the word, the* DEVIL *stamps his foot again, slams the door and goes. The* ANGEL *disappears. From the other room come* MATRENA *and* SIMON, *crossing to the hearth.*)

SIMON: He was in prayer.

MATRENA: His face was illumined and such a light shone from him that at first I thought it was a fire. Oh, Simon, who is this that has dwelt with us?

(MICHAEL *comes in from the other room, goes to the steps, where he turns and faces them.*)

MICHAEL: God has pardoned me, good master and mistress. Do you also pardon me?

SIMON: Tell us, Michael, who you are and why God punished you.

MICHAEL: I was an angel in Heaven and God punished me because I disobeyed Him. He sent me to earth to bear away a woman's soul. But the woman who had given birth to twin babies cried to me, "Angel of God, I cannot leave them. They will die, I have no kin to care for them. Do not take away my soul. Children cannot live without mother or father!" So I hearkened to the mother and flew back to God, saying, "Little children cannot live without mother or father, so I did not take away the mother's soul." Then God said to me, "Go thou and fetch away the soul of the chiding woman, and before thou return to Heaven, thou shalt learn three words. Thou shalt learn both what that is which dwelleth in men, and what that is which is not given to men to know, and what that is whereby men live. When thou hast learned these words thou mayst return to Heaven."

MATRENA: Tell us what you did, Michael.

MICHAEL: I went to earth and took the soul of the chiding woman, then I rose above the village and tried to bear the soul to God,

but a wind caught me, so that my wings hung down and were blown from me. The soul returned alone to God, while I fell to earth along the roadside.

(SIMON *and* MATRENA *marvel*: SIMON *speaks.*)

SIMON: Tell me, Michael, why you smiled three times, and what were the three words of God.

MICHAEL: When you, Simon, took me to your home and Matrena's heart prompted her to share her last crust, I smiled because I knew the first word of God. "Thou shalt learn what that is which dwelleth in men," and I knew by your goodness that what dwelleth in men is Love. I felt glad that God had seen fit to reveal this to me, and I smiled.

MATRENA: What was it you saw over the shoulder of the Baron that made you smile?

MICHAEL: I saw the Angel of Death. No one but I saw him, and I thought, here is this man planning for boots that shall last a year, when he is to die before the nightfall. Then I smiled when I remembered that God had said, "Thou shalt learn what it is not given to men to know."

SIMON: What was it made you smile at the story of the good Sonia Ivanich?

MICHAEL: I recognized in the children the twins that I had thought would die. Yet this woman had fed them and loved them. I beheld in her love and pity for the living God, and understood what that is whereby men live. And I smiled. This much do I tell you to repay your kindness, that men only appear to live by taking thought of themselves; in reality, they live by Love alone. He that dwelleth in Love dwelleth in God and God in him; for God is Love.

(The room is suddenly black with night. Then a hymn bursts forth as though from a great choir of voices, and in the doorway MICHAEL, *bathed in light, stands looking upward. Before him, at the foot of the stairs, kneel the two peasants.)*

CURTAIN

THE VALIANT *

BY

HOLWORTHY HALL

AND

ROBERT MIDDLEMASS

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CHARACTERS

WARDEN HOLT, *about sixty*
FATHER DALY, *the prison chaplain*
JAMES DYKE, *the prisoner*
JOSEPHINE PARIS, *the girl, about eighteen*
DAN, *a jailer*
AN ATTENDANT

SCENE: *The Warden's office in the State's Prison at Wethersfield, Connecticut.*

TIME: *About half-past eleven on a rainy night.*

THE VALIANT

The curtain rises upon the WARDEN'S *office in the State's Prison at Wethersfield, Connecticut. It is a large, cold, unfriendly apartment, with bare floors and staring, whitewashed walls; it is furnished only with the* WARDEN'S *flat-topped desk and swivel-chair, with a few straight-backed chairs, one beside the desk and others against the walls, with a water-cooler and an eight-day clock. On the* WARDEN'S *desk are a telephone instrument, a row of electric push-buttons, and a bundle of forty or fifty letters. At the back of the room are two large windows, crossed with heavy bars; at the left there is a door to an anteroom, and at the right there are two doors, of which the more distant leads to the office of the deputy warden, and the nearer is seldom used.*

WARDEN HOLT, *dressed in a dark brown sack suit, with a negligee shirt and black string-tie, carelessly knotted in a bow, is seated at his desk, reflectively smoking a long, thin cigar. He is verging toward sixty, and his responsibilities have printed themselves in italics upon his countenance. His brown hair, and bushy eyebrows are heavily shot with gray; there is a deep parenthesis of wrinkles at the corners of his mouth and innumerable fine lines about his eyes. His bearing indicates that he is accustomed to rank as a despot, and yet his expression is far from that of an unreasoning tyrant. He is no sentimentalist, but he believes that in each of us there is a constant oscillation of good and evil; and that all evil should be justly punished in this world, and that all good should be generously rewarded—in the next.*

Behind the WARDEN, *the prison chaplain stands at one of the barred windows, gazing steadily out into the night.* FATHER DALY *is a slender, white-haired priest of somewhat more than*

middle age; he is dressed in slightly shabby clericals. His face is calm, intellectual, and inspiring; but just at this moment, it gives evidence of a peculiar depression.

The WARDEN *blows a cloud of smoke to the ceiling, inspects the cigar critically, drums on the desk, and finally peers over his shoulder at the chaplain. He clears his throat and speaks brusquely.*

THE WARDEN: Has it started to rain?

FATHER DALY (*answers without turning*): Yes, it has.

THE WARDEN (*glaring at his cigar and impatiently tossing it aside*): It *would* rain to-night. (*His tone is vaguely resentful, as though the weather had added a needless fraction to his impatience.*)

FATHER DALY (*glances at a big silver watch*): It's past eleven o'clock. (*He draws a deep breath and comes slowly to the center of the room.*) We haven't much longer to wait.

THE WARDEN: No, thank God! (*He gets up, and goes to the water-cooler; with the glass halfway to his lips he pauses.*) Was he quiet when you left him?

FATHER DALY (*a trifle abstractedly*): Yes, yes, he was perfectly calm and I believe he'll stay so to the very end.

THE WARDEN (*finishes his drink, comes back to his desk, and lights a fresh cigar*): You've got to hand it to him, Father; I never saw such nerve in all my life. It isn't bluff, and it isn't a trance, either, like some of 'em have—it's plain nerve. You've certainly got to hand it to him. (*He shakes his head in frank admiration.*)

FATHER DALY (*sorrowfully*): That's the pity of it—that a man with all his courage hasn't a better use for it. Even now, it's very difficult for me to reconcile his character, as I see it, with what we know he's done.

THE WARDEN (*continues to shake his head*): He's got my goat, all right.

FATHER DALY (*with a slight grimace*): Yes, and he's got mine, too.

THE WARDEN: When he sent for you to-night, I hoped he was going to talk.

FATHER DALY: He did talk, very freely.

THE WARDEN: What about?

FATHER DALY (*smiles faintly, and sits beside the desk*): Most everything.

THE WARDEN (*looks up quickly*): Himself?

FATHER DALY: No. That seems to be the only subject he isn't interested in.

THE WARDEN (*sits up to his desk, and leans upon it with both elbows*): He still won't give you any hint about who he really is?

FATHER DALY: Not the slightest. He doesn't intend to, either. He intends to die as a man of mystery to us. Sometimes I wonder if he isn't just as much of a mystery to himself.

THE WARDEN: Oh, he's trying to shield somebody, that's all. James Dyke isn't his right name—we know that; and we know all the rest of his story is a fake, too. Well, where's his motive? I'll tell you where it is. It's to keep his family and his friends, wherever they are, from knowing what's happened to him. Lot's of 'em have the same idea but I never knew one to carry it as far as this, before. You've certainly got to hand it to him. All we know is that we've got a man under sentence; and we don't know who he is, or where he comes from, or anything else about him, any more than we did four months ago.

FATHER DALY: It takes moral courage for a man to shut himself away from his family and his friends like that. They would have comforted him.

THE WARDEN: Not necessarily. What time is it?

FATHER DALY: Half-past eleven.

THE WARDEN (*rises and walks over to peer out of one of the barred windows*): I guess I'm getting too old for this sort of thing.

A necktie party didn't use to bother me so much; but every time one comes along nowadays, I've got the blue devils beforehand and afterward. And this one is just about the limit.

FATHER DALY: It certainly isn't a pleasant duty even with the worst of them.

THE WARDEN (*wheels back abruptly*): But what gets *me* is why I should hate this one more than any of the others. The boy is guilty as hell.

FATHER DALY: Yes, he killed a man. "Wilfully, feloniously, and with malice aforethought."

THE WARDEN: And he pleaded guilty. So he deserves just what he's going to get.

FATHER DALY: That is the law. But has it ever occurred to you, Warden, that every now and then when a criminal behaves in a rather gentlemanly fashion to us, we instinctively think of him as just a little less of a criminal?

THE WARDEN: Yes, it has. But, all the same, this front of his makes me as nervous as the devil. He pleaded guilty all right, but he don't *act* guilty. I feel just as if to-night I was going to do something every bit as criminal as he did. I can't help it. And when I get to feeling like that, why, I guess it's pretty nearly time I sent in my resignation.

FATHER DALY (*reflectively*): His whole attitude has been very remarkable. Why, only a few minutes ago I found myself comparing it with the fortitude that the Christian martyrs carried to their death, and yet——

THE WARDEN: He's no martyr.

FATHER DALY: I know it. And he's anything in the world but a Christian. That was just what I was going to say.

THE WARDEN: Has he got any religious streak in him at all?

FATHER DALY: I'm afraid he hasn't. He listens to me very attentively, but—— (*He shrugs his shoulders.*) It's only because

I offer him companionship. Anybody else would do quite as well—and any other topic would suit him better.

THE WARDEN: Well, if he wants to face God as a heathen, *we* can't force him to change his mind.

FATHER DALY (*with gentle reproach*): No, but we can never give up trying to save his immortal soul. And his soul to-night seems as dark and foreboding to me as a haunted house would seem to the small boys down in Wethersfield. But I haven't given up hope.

THE WARDEN: No—you wouldn't.

FATHER DALY: Are you going to talk with him again yourself?

THE WARDEN (*opens a drawer of his desk, and brings out a large envelope*): I'll have to. I've still got some Liberty Bonds that belong to him. (*He gazes at the envelope, and smiles grimly.*) That was a funny thing—when the newspaper syndicate offered him twenty-five hundred for his autobiography, he jumped at it so quick I was sure he wanted the money for something or other. (*He slaps the envelope on the desk.*) But now the bonds are here, waiting for him, he won't say what to do with 'em. Know why? (FATHER DALY *shakes his head.*) Why, of course you do! Because the story he wrote was pure bunk from start to finish and the only reason he jumped at the chance of writing it was so's he could pull the wool over everybody's head a little farther. He don't want the bonds, but I've got to do *something* with 'em. (*He pushes a button on the desk.*) And besides, I want to make one more try at finding out who he is.

FATHER DALY: Shall I go with you to see him or do you want to see him alone?

THE WARDEN (*sits deliberating with one hand at his forehead, and the other hand tapping the desk*): Father, you gave me a thought —I believe I'm going to do something to-night that's never been done before in this prison—that is to say—not in all the twenty-eight years that *I've* been warden.

FATHER DALY: What's that?

THE WARDEN (*who has evidently come to an important decision, raps the desk more forcibly with his knuckles*): Instead of our going to see him, I'll have that boy brought into this office and let him sit here with you and me until the time comes for us all to walk through that door to the execution room.

FATHER DALY (*startled*): What on earth is your idea in doing a thing like that?

THE WARDEN: Because maybe if he sits here awhile with just you and me, and we go at him right, he'll loosen up and tell us about himself. It'll be different from being in his cell; it'll be sort of free and easy, and maybe he'll weaken. And then, besides, if we take him to the scaffold through this passage-way, maybe I can keep the others quiet. If they don't know when the job's being done, they may behave 'emselves. I don't want any such yelling and screeching to-night as we had with that Greek. (*A* JAILER *in blue uniform enters from the deputy's room and stands waiting.*) Dan, I want you to get Dyke and bring him to me here. (The JAILER *stares blankly at him and the* WARDEN'S *voice takes on an added note of authority.*) Get Dyke and bring him in here to me.

THE JAILER: Yes, sir. (*He starts to obey the order but halts in the doorway and turns as the* WARDEN *speaks again. It is apparent that the* WARDEN *is a strict disciplinarian of the prison staff.*)

THE WARDEN: Oh, Dan!

THE JAILER: Yes, sir?

THE WARDEN: How nearly ready are they?

THE JAILER: They'll be all set in ten or fifteen minutes, sir. Twenty minutes at the outside.

THE WARDEN (*very sharp and magisterial*): Now, I don't want any hitch or delay in this thing to-night. If there is, somebody's going to get in awful Dutch with me. Pass that along.

THE JAILER: There won't be none, sir.

THE WARDEN: When everything's ready—not a second before—you let me know.

THE JAILER: Yes, sir.

THE WARDEN: I'll be right here with Dyke and Father Daly.

THE JAILER (*eyes widening*): Here?

THE WARDEN (*peremptorily*): Yes, here!

THE JAILER (*crushes down his astonishment*): Yes, sir.

THE WARDEN: When everything and everybody is ready, you come from the execution room through the passage—— (*he gestures toward the nearer door on the right*) open that door quietly and stand there.

THE JAILER: Yes, sir.

THE WARDEN: You don't have to say anything, and I don't *want* you to say anything. Just stand there. That all clear?

THE JAILER: Yes, sir.

THE WARDEN: That'll be the signal for us to start—understand?

THE JAILER: Yes, sir.

THE WARDEN (*draws a deep breath*): All right. Now bring Dyke to me.

THE JAILER: Yes, sir. (*He goes out dazedly.*)

FATHER DALY: What about the witnesses and the reporters?

THE WARDEN: They're having their sandwiches and coffee now—the deputy'll have 'em seated in another ten or fifteen minutes. Let 'em wait. (*His voice becomes savage.*) I'd like to poison the lot of 'em. Reporters! Witnesses! (*The telephone bell rings.*) Hello—yes—yes—what's that?—Yes, yes, right here—who wants him? (*To* FATHER DALY.) Father, it's the Governor! (*His expression is tense.*)

FATHER DALY (*his voice also gives evidence of incredulity and*

hope): What! (*He walks swiftly over to the desk.*) Is it about Dyke?

THE WARDEN: Ssh. (*He turns to the telephone.*) Yes, this is Warden Holt speaking. Hello—oh, hello, Governor Fuller, how are you? Oh, I'm between grass and hay, thanks. Well, this isn't my idea of a picnic exactly—yes—yes—— Oh, I should say in about half an hour or so—everything's just about ready. (*His expression gradually relaxes, and* FATHER DALY, *with a little sigh and shake of the head, turns away.*) Oh, no, there won't be any slip-up—yes, we made the regular tests, one this afternoon and another at nine o'clock to-night—— Oh, no, Governor, nothing can go wrong—— Well, according to the law I've got to get it done as soon as possible after midnight, but you're the Governor of the state—— How long?—— Certainly, Governor, I can hold it off as long as you want me to—— What say?—— A *girl!*—— You're going to send her to me?—you *have* sent her!—she ought to be here by this time?—— All right, Governor, I'll ring you up when it's over. Good-bye. (*He hangs up the receiver, mops his forehead with his handkerchief, and turns to* FATHER DALY *in great excitement.*) Did you get *that?* Some girl thinks Dyke's her long-lost brother, and she's persuaded the old man to let her come out here to-night—he wants me to hold up the job until she's had a chance to see him. She's due here any minute, he says—in his own car—escorted by his own private secretary! Can you beat it?

FATHER DALY (*downcast*): Poor girl!

THE WARDEN (*blots his forehead vigorously*): For a minute there I thought it was going to be a reprieve at the very least. Whew!

FATHER DALY: So did I.

(*The door from the deputy's room is opened, and* DYKE *comes in, followed immediately by the* JAILER. DYKE *halts just inside the door and waits passively to be told what to do next. He has a lean, pale face, with a high forehead, good eyes, and a strong chin;*

his mouth is ruled in a firm straight line. His wavy hair is prematurely gray. His figure has the elasticity of youth, but he might pass among strangers either as a man of forty, or as a man of twenty-five, depending upon the mobility of his features at a given moment. He is dressed in a dark shirt open at the throat, dark trousers without belt or suspenders, and soft slippers. The JAILER *receives a nod from the* WARDEN, *and goes out promptly, closing the door behind him.*)

THE WARDEN (*swings half-way around in his swivel-chair*): Sit down, Dyke. (*He points to the chair at the right of his desk.*)

DYKE: Thanks. (*He goes directly to the chair and sits down.*)

THE WARDEN (*leans back, and surveys him thoughtfully.* FATHER DALY *remains in the background*): Dyke, you've been here under my charge for nearly four months and I want to tell you that from first to last you've behaved yourself like a gentleman.

DYKE (*his manner is vaguely cynical without being in the least impertinent*): Why should I make you any trouble?

THE WARDEN: Well, you *haven't* made me any trouble, and I've tried to show what I think about it. I've made you every bit as comfortable as the law would let me.

DYKE: You've been very kind to me. (*He glances over his shoulder at the chaplain.*) And you, too, Father.

THE WARDEN: I've had you brought in here to stay from now on. (DYKE *looks inquiringly at him.*) No, you won't have to go back to your cell again. You're to stay right here with Father Daly and me.

DYKE (*carelessly*): All right.

THE WARDEN (*piqued by this cool reception of the distinguished favor*): You don't seem to understand that I'm doing something a long way out of the ordinary for you.

DYKE: Oh, yes, I do, but maybe *you* don't understand why it doesn't give me much of a thrill.

FATHER DALY (*comes forward*): My son, the Warden is only trying to do you one more kindness.

DYKE: I know he is, Father, but the Warden isn't taking very much of a gamble. From now on, one place is about the same as another.

THE WARDEN: What do you mean?

DYKE (*his voice is very faintly sarcastic*): Why, I mean that I'm just as much a condemned prisoner here as when I was in my cell. That door (*he points to it*) leads right *back* to my cell. Outside those windows are armed guards every few feet. You yourself can't get through the iron door in that anteroom (*he indicates the door to the left*) until somebody on the outside unlocks it; and I know as well as you do where *that* door (*he points to the nearer door on the right*) leads to.

THE WARDEN (*stiffly*): Would you rather wait in your cell?

DYKE: Oh, no, this is a little pleasanter. Except——

THE WARDEN: Except what?

DYKE: In my cell, I could smoke.

THE WARDEN (*shrugs his shoulders*): What do you want—cigar or cigarette?

DYKE: A cigarette, if it's all the same.

(*The* WARDEN *opens a drawer of his desk, takes out a box of cigarettes, removes one and hands it to* DYKE. *The* WARDEN, *striking a match, lights* DYKE'S *cigarette, and then carefully puts out the match.*)

DYKE (*smiles faintly*): Thanks. You're a good host.

THE WARDEN: Dyke, before it's too late I wish you'd think over what Father Daly and I've said to you so many times.

DYKE: I've thought of nothing else.

THE WARDEN: Then—as man to man—and this is your last chance —who are you?

DYKE (*inspects his cigarette*): Who am I? James Dyke—a murderer.

THE WARDEN: That isn't your real name and we know it.

DYKE: You're not going to execute a name—you're going to execute a *man*. What difference does it make whether you call me Dyke or something else?

THE WARDEN: You had another name once. What was it?

DYKE: If I had, I've forgotten it.

FATHER DALY: Your mind is made up, my son?

DYKE: Yes, Father, it is.

THE WARDEN: Dyke.

DYKE: Yes, sir.

THE WARDEN: Do you see this pile of letters? (*He places his hand over it.*)

DYKE: Yes, sir.

THE WARDEN (*fingers them*): Every one of these letters is about the same thing and all put together we've got maybe four thousand of 'em. These here are just a few samples.

DYKE: What about them?

THE WARDEN: We've had letters from every State in the Union and every province in Canada. We've had fifteen or twenty from England, four or five from France, two from Australia and one from Russia.

DYKE: Well?

THE WARDEN (*inclines toward him*): Do you know what every one of those letters says—what four thousand different people are writing to me about?

DYKE: No, sir.

THE WARDEN (*speaks slowly and impressively*): Who *are* you—and are you the missing son—or brother—or husband—or sweetheart?

DYKE (*flicks his cigarette ashes to the floor*): Have you answered them?

THE WARDEN: No, I couldn't. I want you to.

DYKE: How's that?

THE WARDEN: I want you to tell me who you are. (DYKE *shakes his head.*) Can't you see you *ought* to do it?

DYKE: No, sir, I can't exactly see that. Suppose you explain it to me.

THE WARDEN (*suddenly*): You're trying to shield somebody, aren't you?

DYKE: Yes—no, I'm not!

THE WARDEN (*glances at* FATHER DALY *and nods with elation*): Who is it? Your family?

DYKE: I said I'm not.

THE WARDEN: But first, you said you were.

DYKE: That was a slip of the tongue.

THE WARDEN (*has grown persuasive*): Dyke, just listen to me a minute. Don't be narrow, look at this thing in a big, broad way. Suppose you should tell me your real name, and I publish it, it'll bring an awful lot of sorrow, let's say, to *one* family, *one* home, and that's your own. That's probably what you're thinking about. Am I right? You want to spare your family and I don't blame you. On the surface, it sure would look like a mighty white thing for you to do. But look at it *this* way: suppose you came out with the truth, flat-footed, why, you might put all that sorrow into *one* home—your own—but at the same time you'd be putting an immense amount of relief in four thousand—others. Don't you get that? Don't you figure you owe something to all these other people?

DYKE: Not a thing.

FATHER DALY (*has been fidgeting*): My boy, the Warden is absolutely right. You do owe something to the other people—you owe them peace of mind—and for the sake of all those thousands of poor, distressed women, who imagine God knows what, I beg of you to tell us who you are.

DYKE: Father, I simply can't do it.

FATHER DALY: Think carefully, my boy, think very carefully. We're not asking out of idle curiosity.

DYKE: I know that, but please don't let's talk about it any more. (*To the* WARDEN.) You can answer those letters whenever you want to, and you can say I'm not the man they're looking for. That'll be the truth, too. Because I haven't any mother—or father—or sister—or wife—or sweetheart. That's fair enough, isn't it?

FATHER DALY (*sighs wearily*): As you will, my son.

THE WARDEN: Dyke, there's one more thing.

DYKE: Yes?

THE WARDEN: Here are the Liberty Bonds (*he takes up the large envelope from his desk*) that belong to you. Twenty-five hundred dollars in real money.

DYKE (*removes the bonds and examines them*): Good-looking, aren't they?

THE WARDEN (*casually*): What do you want me to do with them?

DYKE: Well, I can't very well take them with me, so, under the circumstances, I'd like to put them where they'll do the most good.

THE WARDEN (*more casually yet*): Who do you want me to send 'em to?

DYKE (*laughs quietly*): Now, Warden Holt, you didn't think you were going to catch me that way, did you?

THE WARDEN (*scowls*): Who'll I send 'em to? I can't keep 'em here, and I can't destroy 'em. What do you want to do with 'em?

DYKE (*ponders diligently and tosses the envelopes to the desk*): I don't know. I'll think of something to do with them. I'll tell you in just a minute. Is there anything else?

THE WARDEN: Not unless you want to make some sort of statement.

DYKE: No, I guess I've said everything. I killed a man and I'm not sorry for it—that is, I'm not sorry I killed that particular person. I——

FATHER DALY (*raises his hand*): Repentance——

DYKE (*raises his own hand in turn*): I've heard that repentance, Father, is the sick bed of the soul—and mine is very well and flourishing. The man deserved to be killed; he wasn't fit to live. It was my duty to kill him, and I did it. I'd never struck a man in anger in all my life, but when I knew what that fellow had done, I knew I had to kill him, and I did it deliberately and intentionally—and carefully. I knew what I was doing, and I haven't any excuse—that is, I haven't any excuse that satisfies the law. Now, I learned pretty early in life that whatever you do in this world you have to pay for in one way or another. If you kill a man, the price you have to pay is this (*he makes a gesture which sweeps the entire room*) and that (*he points to the nearer door on the right*) and I'm going to pay it. That's all there is to that. And an hour from now, while my body is lying in there, if a couple of angel policemen grab my soul and haul it up before God——

FATHER DALY (*profoundly shocked*): My boy, my boy, please——

DYKE: I beg your pardon, Father. I don't mean to trample on anything that's sacred to you, but what I do mean to say is this: If I've got to be judged by God Almighty for the crime of murder, I'm not afraid, because the other fellow will certainly be there, too, won't he? And when God hears the whole story and both sides of it, which *you* never heard and never will—and

they never heard it in the court room, either—why, then, if he's any kind of a God at all, I'm willing to take my chances with the other fellow. That's how concerned I am about the hereafter. And, if it'll make you feel any better, Father, why I *do* rather think there's going to be a hereafter. I read a book once that said a milligram of musk will give out perfume for seven thousand years, and a milligram of radium will give out light for *seventy* thousand. Why shouldn't a soul—mine, for instance, —live more than twenty-seven? But if there *isn't* any hereafter—if we just die and are dead and that's all—why, I'm still not sorry and I'm not afraid, because I'm quits with the other fellow—the law is quits with me, and it's all balanced on the books. And that's all there is to that. (*An* ATTENDANT *enters from the anteroom.*)

THE WARDEN: Well? What is it?

THE ATTENDANT: Visitor to see you, sir. With a note from Governor Fuller. (*He presents it.*)

THE WARDEN (*barely glances at the envelope*): Oh! A young woman?

THE ATTENDANT: Yes, sir.

THE WARDEN: Is Mrs. Case there?

THE ATTENDANT: Yes, sir.

THE WARDEN: Have the girl searched, and then take her into the anteroom and wait till I call you.

THE ATTENDANT: Yes, sir. (*He goes out.*)

THE WARDEN: Dyke, a young woman has just come to see you—do you want to see her?

DYKE: I don't think so. What does she want?

THE WARDEN: She thinks maybe she's your sister, and she's come a thousand miles to find out.

DYKE: She's wrong. I haven't any sister.

THE WARDEN (*hesitates*): Will I tell her that, or do you want to tell it to her yourself?

DYKE: Oh, you tell her.

THE WARDEN: All right. (*He starts to rise but resumes his seat as* DYKE *speaks.*)

DYKE: Just a second—she's come a thousand miles to see me, did you say?

THE WARDEN: Yes, and she's got special permission from the Governor to talk to you—that is, with my O. K.

DYKE: A year ago, nobody'd have crossed the street to look at me, and now they come a thousand miles!

FATHER DALY: This is one of your debts to humanity, my boy. It wouldn't take you two minutes to see her, and, if you don't, after she's made that long journey in hope and dread and suffering——

DYKE: Where can I talk with her—here?

THE WARDEN: Yes.

DYKE: Alone? (*The* WARDEN *is doubtful.*) Why, you don't need to be afraid. I haven't the faintest idea who the girl is, but if she happens to be some poor misguided sentimental fool, with a gun or a pocket full of cyanide of potassium, she's wasting her time. I wouldn't cheat the sovereign state of Connecticut for anything in the world—not even to please a young lady.

THE WARDEN: Dyke, there's something about you that gets everybody.

DYKE: How about the jury?

THE WARDEN: You've got a sort of way with you——

DYKE: How about that spread-eagle district attorney?

THE WARDEN: I'm going to let you talk with that girl in here—alone.

DYKE: Thanks.

THE WARDEN: It's a sort of thing that's never been done before, but if I put you on your honor——

DYKE (*cynically*): My honor! Thank you, so much.

FATHER DALY: Warden, are you sure it's wise?

DYKE: Father, I'm disappointed in you. Do you imagine I'd do anything that could reflect on Warden Holt—or you—or the young lady—or *me?*

THE WARDEN: Father, will you take Dyke into the deputy's room? I want to speak to the young lady first.

FATHER DALY: Certainly. Come, my boy. (FATHER DALY *and* DYKE *start toward the deputy's room.*)

THE WARDEN: I'll call you in just a couple of minutes.

DYKE: We promise not to run away. (*They go out together.*)

THE WARDEN (*calls*): Wilson! (*The* ATTENDANT *enters from the left.*)

THE ATTENDANT: Yes, sir.

THE WARDEN: Is the girl there?

THE ATTENDANT: Yes, sir.

THE WARDEN: Frisked?

THE ATTENDANT: Yes, sir.

THE WARDEN: Everything all right?

THE ATTENDANT: Yes, sir.

THE WARDEN (*throws away his cigar*): Bring her in.

THE ATTENDANT: Yes, sir. (*He speaks through the door at the left.*) Step this way, Miss. This here's the Warden.

(*A young girl appears on the threshold, and casts about in mingled curiosity and apprehension. She is fresh and wholesome, and rather pretty; but her manner betrays a certain spiritual aloofness from the ultra-*

modern world—a certain delicate reticence of the flesh —which immediately separates her from the metropolitan class. Indeed, she is dressed far too simply for a metropolitan girl of her age; she wears a blue tailored suit with deep white cuffs and a starched white sailor-collar, and a small blue hat which fits snugly over her fluffy hair. Her costume is not quite conservative enough to be literally old-fashioned, but it hints at the taste and repression of an old-fashioned home.

She is neither timid nor aggressive; she is self-unconscious. She looks at the Warden *squarely, but not in boldness, and yet not in feminine appeal; she has rather the fearlessness of a girl who has lost none of her illusions about men in general. Her expression is essentially serious; it conveys, however, the idea that her seriousness is due to her present mission, and that ordinarily she takes an active joy in the mere pleasure of existence.*)

The Warden (*he had expected a very different type of visitor, so that he is somewhat taken aback*): All right, Wilson.

The Attendant: Yes, sir. (*He goes out.*)

The Warden (*with grave deference, half rises*): Will you sit down?

The Girl: Why—thank you very much. (*She sits in the chair beside the desk and regards him trustfully.*)

The Warden (*he is palpably affected by her youth and innocence, and he is not quite sure how best to proceed, but eventually he makes an awkward beginning*): You've had an interview with the Governor, I understand?

The Girl: Yes, sir. I was with him almost an hour.

The Warden: And you want to see Dyke, do you?

The Girl: Yes, sir. I *hope* I'm not—too late.

THE WARDEN: No, you're not too late. (*He is appraising her carefully.*) But I want to ask you a few questions beforehand. (*Her reaction of uncertainty induces him to soften his tone.*) There isn't anything to get upset about. I just want to make it easier for you, not harder. Where do you live?

THE GIRL: In Ohio.

THE WARDEN (*very kindly*): What place?

THE GIRL: In Pennington, sir. It's a little town not far from Columbus.

THE WARDEN: And you live out there with your father and mother?

THE GIRL: No, sir—just my mother and I. My father died when I was a little baby.

THE WARDEN: Why didn't your mother come here herself, instead of sending you?

THE GIRL: She couldn't. She's sick.

THE WARDEN: I see. Have you any brothers or sisters?

THE GIRL (*slightly more at ease*): Just one brother, sir—this one. He and I were the only children. We were very fond of each other.

THE WARDEN: He was considerably older than you?

THE GIRL: Oh, yes. He's ten years older.

THE WARDEN: Why did he leave home?

THE GIRL: I don't really know, sir, except he just wanted to be in the city. Pennington's pretty small.

THE WARDEN: How long is it since you've seen him?

THE GIRL: It's eight years.

THE WARDEN (*his voice is almost paternal*): As long as that? H'm! And how old are you now?

THE GIRL: I'm almost eighteen.

THE WARDEN (*repeats slowly*): Almost eighteen. H'm! And are

you sure after all this time you'd recognize your brother if you saw him?

THE GIRL: Well—(*she looks down, as if embarrassed to make the admission*)—of course I *think* so, but maybe I couldn't. You see, I was only a little girl when he went away—he wasn't a bad boy, sir, I don't think he could ever be really bad—but if this *is* my brother, why he's been in a great deal of trouble and you know that trouble makes people look different.

THE WARDEN: Yes, it does. But what makes you think this man Dyke may be your brother—and why didn't you think of it sooner? The case has been in the papers for the last six months.

THE GIRL: Why, it wasn't until last Tuesday that mother saw a piece in the *Journal*—that's the Columbus paper—that he'd written all about himself, and there was one little part of it that sounded so like Joe—like the funny way he used to say things—and then there was a picture that looked the least little *bit* like him—well, mother just wanted me to come East and find out for sure.

THE WARDEN: It's too bad she couldn't come herself. She'd probably know him whether he'd changed or not.

THE GIRL: Yes, sir. But I'll do the best I can.

THE WARDEN: When was the last time you heard from him, and where was he, and what was he doing?

THE GIRL: Why, it's about five or six years since we had a letter from Joe. He was in Seattle, Washington.

THE WARDEN: What doing?

THE GIRL: I don't remember. At home, though, he worked in the stationery store. He liked books.

THE WARDEN (*suspiciously*): Why do you suppose he didn't write home?

THE GIRL: I—couldn't say. He was just—thoughtless.

THE WARDEN: Wasn't in trouble of any kind?

THE GIRL: Oh, *no!* Never. That is—unless he's—here now.

THE WARDEN (*deliberates*): How are you going to tell him?

THE GIRL: I don't know what you mean.

THE WARDEN: Why, you say maybe you wouldn't know him even if you saw him—and I'll guarantee this man Dyke won't help you out very much. How do you think you're going to tell? Suppose he don't want to be recognized by you or anybody else? Suppose he's so ashamed of himself he——

THE GIRL: I'd thought of that. I'm just going to talk to him—ask him questions—about things he and I used to do together—I'll watch his face, and if he's my brother, I'm sure I can tell.

THE WARDEN (*with tolerant doubt*): What did you and your brother ever use to do that would help you out now?

THE GIRL: He used to play games with me when I was a little girl, and tell me stories—that's what I'm counting on mostly—the stories.

THE WARDEN: I'm afraid——

THE GIRL: Especially Shakespeare stories.

THE WARDEN: Shakespeare!

THE GIRL: Why, yes. He used to get the plots of the plays—all the Shakespeare plays—out of a book by a man named Lamb, and then he'd tell me the stories in his own words. It was wonderful!

THE WARDEN: I'm certainly afraid he——

THE GIRL: But best of all he'd learn some of the speeches from the plays themselves. He liked to do it—he was sure he was going to be an actor or something—he was in all the high school plays, always. And then he'd teach some of the speeches to me, and we'd say them to each other. And one thing—every night he'd sit side of my bed, and when I got sleepy there were two speeches we'd always say to each other, like good-night—two speeches out of *Romeo and Juliet,* and then I'd go to sleep.

I can see it all. (*The* WARDEN *shakes his head.*) Why do you do that?

THE WARDEN: This boy isn't your brother.

THE GIRL: Do you think he isn't?

THE WARDEN: I *know* he isn't.

THE GIRL: How do you?

THE WARDEN: This boy never heard of Shakespeare—much less learned him. (*He presses a button on his desk.*) Oh, I'll let you see him for yourself, only you might as well be prepared. (*The* ATTENDANT *enters from the anteroom.*) Tell Dyke and Father Daly to come in here—they're in the deputy's room.

THE ATTENDANT: Yes, sir. (*He crosses behind the* WARDEN, *and goes off to the right.*)

THE WARDEN: If he turns out to be your brother—which he won't —you can have, say, an hour with him. If he don't, you'll oblige me by cutting it as short as you can.

THE GIRL: You see, I've got to tell mother something perfectly definite. She's worried so long about him, and—and *now* the suspense is perfectly terrible for her.

THE WARDEN: I can understand that. You're a plucky girl.

THE GIRL: Of course, it would be awful for us if this *is* Joe, but even that would be better for mother than just to stay awake nights, and wonder and wonder, and never *know* what became of him. (*The* ATTENDANT *opens the door of the deputy's room, and when* DYKE *and* FATHER DALY *have come in, he crosses again behind the* WARDEN, *and is going out at the left when the* WARDEN *signs to him and he stops.*)

THE WARDEN (*gets to his feet*): Dyke, this is the young lady that's come all the way from Pennington, Ohio, to see you.

DYKE (*who has been talking in an undertone to* FATHER DALY, *raises his head quickly*): Yes, sir?

THE WARDEN: I've decided you can talk with her here—alone. (*The* GIRL *has risen, breathless, and stands fixed;* DYKE *inspects her coldly from head to foot.*)

DYKE: Thank you. It won't take long.

THE WARDEN (*has been scanning the girl's expression; now, as he sees that she has neither recognized* DYKE *nor failed to recognize him, he makes a little grimace in confirmation of his own judgment*): Father Daly and I'll stay in the deputy's office. We'll leave the door open. Wilson, you stand in the anteroom with the door open.

DYKE (*bitterly*): My honor!

THE WARDEN: What say?

DYKE: I didn't say anything.

THE WARDEN (*to the* GIRL): Will you please remember what I told you about the time?

THE GIRL: Oh, yes, sir.

THE WARDEN: Come, Father. (*They go off into the deputy's room, and the* ATTENDANT, *at a nod from the* WARDEN, *goes off at the left.*)

(DYKE *and the* GIRL *are now facing each other;* DYKE *is well-poised and insouciant and gives the impression of complete indifference to the moment. The* GIRL, *on the other hand, is deeply agitated and her agitation is gradually increased by* DYKE'S *own attitude.*)

THE GIRL (*after several efforts to speak*): Mother sent me to see you.

DYKE (*politely callous*): Yes?

THE GIRL (*compelled to drop her eyes*): You see, we haven't seen or heard of my brother Joe for ever so long, and mother thought —after what we read in the papers——

DYKE: That I might be your brother Joe?

THE GIRL (*obviously relieved*): Yes, that's it.

DYKE: Well, you can easily see that I'm not your brother, can't you?

THE GIRL (*stares at him again*): I'm not sure. You look a little like him, just as the picture in the paper did, but then again, it's so long—(*she shakes her head dubiously*) and I'd thought of Joe so differently——

DYKE (*his manner is somewhat indulgent, as though to a child*): As a matter of fact, I couldn't be *your* brother, or anybody else's brother, because I never had a sister. So that rather settles it.

THE GIRL: Honestly?

DYKE: Honestly.

THE GIRL (*unconvinced, becomes more appealing*): What's your real name?

DYKE: Dyke—James Dyke.

THE GIRL: That's sure enough your name?

DYKE: Sure enough. You don't think I'd tell a lie at this stage of the game, do you?

THE GIRL (*musing*): No, I don't believe you would. Where do you come from—I mean where were you born?

DYKE: In Canada, but I've lived all over.

THE GIRL: Didn't you ever live in Ohio?

DYKE: No. Never.

THE GIRL: What kind of work did you do—what was your business?

DYKE: Oh, I'm sort of Jack-of-all trades. I've been everything a man *could* be—except a success.

THE GIRL: Do you like books?

DYKE: Books?

THE GIRL: Yes—books to read.

DYKE: I don't read when there's anything better to do. I've read a lot here.

THE GIRL: Did you ever sell books—for a living, I mean?

DYKE: Oh, no.

THE GIRL (*growing confused*): I hope you don't mind my asking so many questions. But I——

DYKE: No—go ahead, if it'll relieve your mind any.

THE GIRL: You went to school somewhere, of course—high school?

DYKE: No, I never got that far.

THE GIRL: Did you ever want to be an actor? Or *were* you ever?

DYKE: No, just a convict.

THE GIRL (*helplessly*): Do you know any poetry?

DYKE: Not to speak of.

THE GIRL (*delays a moment, and then, watching him very earnestly, she recites just above her breath*):

> Thou knowst the mask of night is on my face
> Else would a maiden blush bepaint my cheek
> For that which——

(*Realizing that* DYKE'S *expression is one of utter vacuity she falters, and breaks off the quotation, but she continues to watch him unwaveringly.*) Don't you know what that is?

DYKE: No, but to tell the truth, it sounds sort of silly to *me*. Doesn't it to you?

THE GIRL (*her intonation has become slightly forlorn, but she gathers courage, and puts him to one more test*):

> Good-night, good-night, parting is such sweet sorrow
> That I shall say good-night till it be morrow.

DYKE (*his mouth twitches in amusement*): Eh?

THE GIRL: What comes next?

DYKE: Good Lord, *I* don't know.

THE GIRL (*gazes intently, almost imploringly, at him as though she is making a struggle to read his mind. Then she relaxes and*

holds out her hand) : Good-by. You—you're *not* Joe, are you? I—had to come and find out, though. I hope I've not made you too unhappy.

DYKE (*ignores her hand*) : You're not going now?

THE GIRL (*spiritless*) : Yes. I promised the—is he the Warden? that man in there?—I said I'd go right away if you weren't my brother. And you aren't, so——

DYKE: You're going back to your mother?

THE GIRL: Yes.

DYKE: I'm surprised that she sent a girl like you on a sorry errand like this, instead of——

THE GIRL: She's very sick.

DYKE: Oh, that's too bad.

THE GIRL (*twisting her handkerchief*) : No, she's not well at all. And most of it's from worrying about Joe.

DYKE: Still, when you tell her that her son isn't a murderer—at least, that he isn't *this* one—that'll comfort her a good deal, won't it?

THE GIRL (*reluctantly*) : Yes, I think maybe it will, only——

DYKE: Only what?

THE GIRL: I don't think mother'll ever be *really* well again until she finds out for certain where Joe is and what's become of him.

DYKE (*shakes his head compassionately*) : Mothers ought not to be treated like that. I wish I'd treated *mine* better. By the way, you didn't tell me what your name is.

THE GIRL: Josephine Paris.

DYKE (*is suddenly attentive*) : Paris? That's an unusual name. I've heard it somewhere, too.

THE GIRL: Just like the name of the city—in France.

DYKE (*knitting his brows*) : And your brother's name was Joseph?

THE GIRL: Yes—they used to call us Joe and Josie—that's funny, isn't it?

DYKE (*thoughtfully*): No, I don't think it's so very funny. I rather like it. (*He passes his hand over his forehead as if trying to coerce his memory.*)

THE GIRL: What's the matter?

DYKE (*frowning*): I was thinking of something—now, what on earth was that boy's name! Wait a minute, don't tell me—wait a minute—I've got it! (*He punctuates his triumph with one fist in the palm of the other hand.*) Joseph Anthony Paris!

THE GIRL (*amazed*): Why, that's his name! That's Joe! How did you ever——

DYKE (*his manner is very forcible and convincing*): Wait! Now listen carefully to what I say, and don't interrupt me, because we've only got a minute, and I want you to get this all straight, so you can tell your mother. When the war came along I enlisted and I was overseas for four years—with the Canadians. Early one morning we'd staged a big trench raid, and there was an officer who'd been wounded coming back, and was lying out there in a shell-hole under fire. The Jerries were getting ready for a raid of their own, so they were putting down a box barrage with light guns and howitzers and a few heavies. This officer was lying right in the middle of it. Well, all of a sudden a young fellow dashed out of a trench not far from where I was, and went for that officer. He had to go through a curtain of shells and, more than that, they opened on him with rifles and machine guns. The chances were just about a million to one against him, and he must have known it, but he went out just the same. He got the officer in his arms and started back, but he'd only gone a few yards when a five point nine landed right on top of the two of them. Afterward, we got what was left—the identification tag was still there—and that was the name—Joseph Anthony Paris!

THE GIRL (*carries both hands to her breast*): Oh!

DYKE: If that was your brother's name, then you can tell your mother that he died like a brave man and a soldier, three years ago, in France.

THE GIRL: Joe—my brother Joe—is dead?

DYKE: On the field of battle. It was one of the wonderful, heroic things that went almost unnoticed, as so many of them did. If an officer had seen it, there'd have been a decoration for your mother to keep and remember him by.

THE GIRL: And you were there—and saw it?

DYKE: I was there and saw it. It was three years ago. That's why you and your mother haven't heard from him. And if you don't believe what I've said, why, you just write up to Ottawa and get the official record. Of course (*he shrugs his shoulders contemptuously*) those records are in terribly poor shape, but at least they can tell you what battalion he fought with, when he went overseas. Only you mustn't be surprised no matter whether they say he was killed in action, or died of wounds, or is missing, or even went through the whole war with his outfit, and was honorably discharged. They really don't know what happened to half the men. But I've told you the truth. And it certainly ought to make your mother happy when she knows that her boy died as a soldier, and not as a criminal.

THE GIRL (*is transfigured*): Yes, yes, it will!

DYKE: And does it make you happy, too?

THE GIRL (*nods repeatedly*): Yes. So happy—after what we were both afraid of—I can't even cry—yet. (*She brushes her eyes with her handkerchief.*) I can hardly wait to take it to her.

DYKE (*struck by a sudden inspiration*): I want to give you something else to take to her. (*He picks up from the desk the envelope containing the Liberty Bonds and seals it.*) I want you to give this to your mother from me. Tell her it's from a man who was at Vimy Ridge and saw your brother die, so it's a sort of memorial for him. (*He touches her arm as she ab-*

sently begins to tear open the envelope.) No, don't you open it—let *her* do it.

THE GIRL: What is it? Can't I know?

DYKE: Never mind now, but give it to her. It's all I've got in the world and it's too late now for me to do anything else with it. And have your mother buy a little gold star to wear for her son —and you get one, too, and wear it—here—— (*He touches his heart.*) Will you?

THE GIRL: Yes—I will. And yet somehow I'll almost feel that I'm wearing it for you, too.

DYKE (*shakes his head soberly*): Oh, no! You mustn't ever do that. I'm not fit to be mentioned in the same breath with a boy like your brother, and now I'm afraid it *is* time for you to go. I'm sorry, but—you'd better. I'm glad you came before it was too late, though.

THE GIRL (*gives him her hand*): Good-by, and thank you. You've done more for me—and mother—than I could possibly tell you. And—and I'm so sorry for you—so *truly sorry*—I wish I could only do something to make you a tiny bit happier, too. Is there anything I could do?

DYKE (*stares at her and by degrees he becomes wistful*): Why—yes, there is. Only I—— (*He leaves the sentence uncompleted.*)

THE GIRL: What is it?

DYKE (*looks away*): I can't tell you. I never should have let myself think of it.

THE GIRL: Please tell me. I want you to. For—for Joe's sake, tell me what I can do.

DYKE (*his voice is low and desolate*): Well—in all the months I've been in this hideous place, you're the first girl I've seen. I didn't ever expect to see one again. I'd forgotten how much like angels women look. I've been terribly lonesome to-night, especially, and if you really do want to do something for me—

for your brother's sake—you see, you're going to leave me in just a minute and—and I haven't any sister of my own, or anybody else, to say good-by to me—so, if you could—*really* say good-by——

(*She gazes at him for a moment, understands, flushes, and then slowly moves into his outstretched arms. He holds her close to him, touches his lips to her forehead twice, and releases her.*)

DYKE (*thickly*): Good-by, my dear.

THE GIRL: Good-night. (*She endeavors to smile, but her voice catches in her throat.*) Good-by.

DYKE (*impulsively*): What is it?

THE GIRL (*shakes her head*): N-nothing.

DYKE: Nothing?

THE GIRL (*clutches her handkerchief tight in her palm*): I was thinking—I was thinking what I used to say to my brother—for good-night. (*She very nearly breaks down.*) If I *only* could have—have said it to him just once more—for good-by.

DYKE: What was it?

THE GIRL: I—I told it to you once, and you said it was silly.

DYKE (*softly*): Say it again.

THE GIRL (*she cannot quite control her voice*):

Good-night, good-night, parting is such sweet sorrow
That I shall say good-night till it be morrow.

(*She goes uncertainly toward the anteroom, hesitates, almost turns back, and then with a choking sob she hurries through the door and closes it behind her. For several seconds* DYKE *stands rigidly intent upon that door; until at length, without changing his attitude or his expression, he speaks very tenderly and reminiscently.*)

Sleep dwell upon thine eyes, peace in thy breast;
Would *I* were sleep and peace, so sweet to rest.

(*The* WARDEN *and* FATHER DALY *come in quietly from the deputy's room; and as they behold* DYKE, *how rapt and unconscious of them he is, they look at each other, questioningly. The* WARDEN *glances at the clock and makes as though to interrupt* DYKE'S *solitary reflections but* FATHER DALY *quietly restrains him.*

The CHAPLAIN *sits down in one of the chairs at the back wall; the* WARDEN *crosses on tip-toe and sits at his desk; he is excessively nervous and he continually refers to the clock.* DYKE *turns, as though unwillingly, from the door; there are depths in his eyes, and his thoughts are evidently far away. He sits in the chair to the right of the* WARDEN'S *desk and leans outward, his right hand on his knee. He puts his left hand to his throat as though to protect it from a sudden pain. He gazes straight ahead into the unknown and speaks in reverie.*)

Of all the wonders that I yet have heard,
It seems to me most strange that men should fear;
Seeing that death, a necessary end,
Will come when it will come.

(*He stops and muses for a time, while the* WARDEN *glances perplexedly at* FATHER DALY *to discover if the priest can interpret what* DYKE *is saying.* FATHER DALY *shakes his head. Abruptly* DYKE'S *face is illumined by a new and welcome recollection; and again he speaks, while the* WARDEN *tries in vain to comprehend him.*)

Cowards die many times before their death;
The valiant never taste of death but once.

(*He stops again and shudders a trifle; his head droops and he repeats, barely above a whisper.*)

The valiant never taste of death but once.

(*The nearer door on the right is opened noiselessly and the* JAILER, *in obedience to his instructions, steps just inside the room and stands there mute.* FATHER DALY *and the* WARDEN *glance at the* JAILER, *and with significance at each other, and both rise, tardily. The* WARDEN'S *hand, as it rests on his desk is seen to tremble. There is a moment of dead silence; presently* DYKE *lifts his head and catches sight of the motionless* ATTENDANT *at the open door. With a quick intake of his breath, he starts half out of his seat and stares, fascinated; he sinks back slowly, and turns his head to gaze first at* FATHER DALY *and then at the* WARDEN. *The* WARDEN *averts his eyes, but* FATHER DALY'S *expression is of supreme pity and encouragement. Involuntarily,* DYKE'S *hand again goes creeping upward toward his throat, but he arrests it. He grasps the arms of his chair and braces himself; he rises then, and stands very erect, in almost the position of a soldier at attention.*)

THE WARDEN (*swallows hard*): Dyke!

FATHER DALY (*brushes past the* WARDEN, *his right hand lifted as though in benediction*): My son!

DYKE (*regards them fixedly; his voice is low and steady*): All right, let's go.

(*He faces about, and with his head held proud and high, and his shoulders squared to the world, he moves slowly toward the open door.* FATHER DALY, *with the light of his calling in his eyes, steps in line just ahead of* DYKE. *The* WARDEN, *his mouth set hard, falls in behind. When they have all gone forward a pace or two,* FATHER DALY *begins to speak, and* DYKE *to reply;* FATHER DALY'S *voice is strong and sweet; and* DYKE *speaks just after him, not mechanically, but in brave and unfaltering response.*)

FATHER DALY: "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills——"

DYKE: "The valiant never taste of death but once."

FATHER DALY: "From whence cometh my help."

DYKE: "The valiant never taste of death but once."

FATHER DALY (*has almost reached the door; his voice rises a semitone, and gains in emotion*): "My help cometh from the Lord which made Heaven and earth."

DYKE: "The valiant never taste of death—but once."

(*When the* WARDEN, *whose hands are tightly clenched, has passed the threshold, the* JAILER *follows and closes the door behind him. There is a very brief pause and then*

CURTAIN

BREAD *

BY

FRED EASTMAN

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CHARACTERS

JOHN CURTIS *(age about forty-two), a farmer*
MARTHA CURTIS *(age about forty), his wife*
GRANDMA *(seventy), his mother*
STELLA *(fifteen), his blind daughter*
BETTY *(fourteen), another daughter*
JIM *(sixteen), his son*

SCENE: *The living room of a farm home.*
TIME: *The present.*

BREAD

The rising curtain discloses the living and dining room of John Curtis and his family. At the rear, right, is a door opening upon the front porch. Balancing it on the left is a rather wide window through which a window box of flowers is seen. In the middle of the right wall is a door leading to the kitchen; in the middle of the left wall, a door leading to a bedroom. The furnishings are simple, even meagre. A dining room table covered with a red tablecloth stands at right center, and at the right front, along the right wall, is a cupboard. In the left rear corner of the room stands a what-not on which is a collection of basket-weaving materials and some large volumes. Upon the floor is a large rag rug, and upon the table an oil reading lamp, with an old-fashioned shade. Directly in front of the window are two chairs, the one on the right an old-fashioned rocker; the one on the left a straight-backed dining room chair similar to half a dozen others about the room. In front of this particular chair is a small table, and upon it one of the large volumes. In the rocking chair sits GRANDMA CURTIS, JOHN'S *mother, darning stockings. She is a woman of about seventy, with gray hair and a simple black dress. In the chair back of the little table is* STELLA, *a blind girl of fifteen, her face bright and filled with enthusiasm as her fingers touch lightly the pages of raised type before her.*

STELLA (*reading*): "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

GRANDMA: That doesn't apply to this family.

STELLA: Why not, Grandma?

GRANDMA: There is nothing poor in spirit about us. Everybody around this house has too much spirit. That's the trouble. It makes 'em all so rambunctious.

STELLA (*reading*): "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled."

GRANDMA: That doesn't apply, either.

STELLA: Why, Grandma!

GRANDMA: This family doesn't hunger and thirst after righteousness. Not so you could notice it. John hungers to make the farm pay; Martha hungers for a piano; Jim hungers for a job in the city, where he thinks he will have more fun and less work; Betty hungers for more eggs from her hens.

STELLA: And you—what do you hunger for, Grandma?

GRANDMA: I hunger for a bathroom in this house. It's a shame the way we have to do without one year after year. Last winter when it was ten below zero——

STELLA: Yes, Grandma, I know. But how could father put in a bathroom when he couldn't even pay the interest on the mortgage?

GRANDMA: I'm not blamin' him. I'm just telling you what I hunger for.

STELLA: And me—what do I hunger for?

GRANDMA: You ought to know. Is it for righteousness?

STELLA: No, I'm afraid it isn't. I hunger to make enough money from my basket weaving to buy some new books with this raised type.

GRANDMA: Well, that's no sin. You're the only one in this house has got any time to read, and if it wasn't for your readin' to me I don't know what I'd do. I would sure be lonesome. Darnin' socks all day! It's the holiest family that way I ever saw.

(*Enter* BETTY *from the door at the right. She is a winsome lass, dressed in a bright gingham, and carrying a basket of eggs. She fairly bursts into the room in her excitement, and leaves the door wide open behind her.*)

BETTY: Hooray, Stella! Fourteen eggs to-day! That's all I need to make my twenty dollars!

STELLA: Fine, Betty! Has mother got her eighty yet?

BETTY: Almost. She had seventy-eight dollars and sixty cents last Tuesday. I don't know how much butter she got from her churning to-day. (*Calling.*) Hey, mother, how many pounds of butter did you make to-day?

(*Enter from the right* MRS. JOHN CURTIS. *She is a plump and hearty woman of about forty. She wears a cheap cotton dress, an apron, and cotton stockings. Her hair is in some disarray and her face is flushed, but pride shines from her eyes. She carries a bowl of butter.*)

MARTHA: Six pounds! And as fine a lot as I ever made!

STELLA: Let me taste it, mother.

(MARTHA *takes a spoon from the cupboard drawer, dips the tip of it in the butter, and gives* STELLA *a taste.*)

MARTHA: Sure. I hope the customers like to eat it as well as I like to make it. There's something about butter-making that's real fun in spite of all the work. To see the yellow come, and then to pat it and roll it until the water is out of it, and then to shape it into a big ball—I don't know, but I feel like an artist makin' statues out of clay.

STELLA (*tasting*): Mother, you *are* an artist. Tell me, does it look as good as it tastes? Is it golden like the sunlight on the ripe wheat fields?

MARTHA: Yes, like the wheat before it begins to get brownish. You remember, don't you? I can't see how you do. You were only three years old when the fever came. I can't remember anything I saw when I was three.

BETTY (*counting on her fingers*): Six times forty is two hundred and forty. That's two dollars and forty cents. Seventy-eight

and two-forty is eighty-something, and my twenty makes one hundred, and—hot dogs! We've got it, mother! We've got the piano!

MARTHA (*triumph in her face*): Have we? That's right! Your twenty and my eighty! Thank goodness! (*She puts the bowl of butter on the table and catching* BETTY'S *hands, dances joyfully around the room.*) A piano! We're going to have a piano!

GRANDMA: We need a bathroom before we need a piano.

MARTHA (*emphatically*): No, we don't. We can get along without a bathroom a while longer, mother. But these children have got to have music lessons.

GRANDMA: Suppose they was to get sick—what good would a piano do 'em? But a bathroom——

MARTHA (*shaking her head*): It's got to be a piano. We've saved for three years for this hundred and done without things we needed. If we was to wait any longer it would be too late. Betty is gettin' to be a big girl already and Stella has been so patient——

STELLA: Do you suppose I can learn to play as easily as I learned the reading?

MARTHA: I'll bet you will find it easier. Why, I never had but two lessons when I was a girl, but I took right to it; and you are smarter than I was.

STELLA: Why didn't you go on?

MARTHA: Our barn burned and there wasn't any more money for music lessons.

GRANDMA: Well, you better not count your chickens before they're hatched.

MARTHA: What do you mean, mother?

GRANDMA: What's happened once can happen again. If you are goin' to get a piano you had better get it before the barn burns or something else happens.

MARTHA: I guess you're right. Three years ago I almost had the hundred, and then Jim broke his leg falling off the roof. When we finished payin' the doctor I only had eleven dollars left.

BETTY: Mother! Let's get it to-day! Something might happen, and besides we could surprise everybody with it to-night. Just think! This very night!

MARTHA (*hesitating*): I couldn't very well go to town to-day. To-morrow the threshers come and I've got the ironin' to do yet.

BETTY (*eagerly*): No, mother! Let's not wait another day. Jim is goin' to town in the Ford to get the binder twine. I heard him say so. He could take the butter and eggs to the grocery for us.

STELLA: Yes, mother, and then he could put the money in the bank as he always does, and you could give him a check to take to the piano store. You've got the piano all picked out, and they said they would deliver it whenever you gave them the check, didn't they?

MARTHA: Yes, they've held it three months for me. They said it was the best used instrument in the shop. But the money ain't on a checking account. I told Jim to put it in the savings department so it would draw interest.

STELLA: You could write a note to the bank, couldn't you, and ask them to let Jim have the money?

BETTY (*dancing up and down*): And get it here to-night! To-night!

MARTHA: I'll do it! And we'll have it here for to-morrow when the threshers come! Guess it will make them sit up some.

GRANDMA: Where you goin' to put it?

MARTHA: Right over where this old cupboard stands. The cupboard can go to the kitchen.

GRANDMA: That will make you walk farther with the dishes.

MARTHA: It doesn't matter. I can stand more walking if we can have a little music. Betty can play a march for me while I walk, can't you, Betty?

BETTY: I'll learn to play a march that will make you gallop. Won't that be fun? Let's shut our eyes and pretend. (*She closes her eyes and pretends that the cupboard is a piano, and plays a rollicking tune while* MARTHA *dances about and* STELLA *beats time with her hands.*)

(*Enter* JIM, *by the front door. He is a well-built lad with dark hair and eyes, and his skin shows the tan of the harvest fields. He wears overalls and seems tired and hot. He stands a moment watching the scene.*)

JIM: Is it the heat or just natural?

STELLA: Oh, Jim, we've got something for you to do.

JIM (*sinking wearily into a chair and wiping the perspiration from his face with a bandanna*): I'll bet you have. Everybody's got something for me to do. There's more work on this farm than——

BETTY: How soon you going to town, Jim?

JIM: Right away. And I wish to heaven I could stay there. Those town boys have it soft.

MARTHA (*taking a bank book from a bowl in the cupboard*): Jim, we are going to surprise your father. I want you to take the butter to town with you and leave it at Collins's grocery. It's six pounds and ought to bring about two-forty. Take Betty's eggs, too; they will bring a quarter. Then take the money to the bank. I'll give you a note that will tell them to give you all I got there on the savings account——

JIM (*suddenly alarmed*): Why? What's the matter? What you goin' to do with it?

BETTY: We're going to get the piano! We're going to get the piano!

JIM: You ain't got enough for that. You said it would take a hundred.

MARTHA: It will. The butter money will make it eighty and Betty will add her twenty. Then you take it to Porter's piano store and tell him to get the piano out here this afternoon sure.

JIM (*swallowing*): I don't see how I could do it to-day, moth——

BETTY (*who in the meantime has taken a purse out of the drawer in the cupboard*): Here's my nineteen dollars and seventy-five cents.

JIM: Wouldn't some other day do, mother? I'm awfully busy to-day. You see, I—I——

MARTHA: What else you got to do besides get the binder twine? That won't take five minutes.

JIM: Why, nothing especially in town, except I wanted to see some of the fellows about something, and——

MARTHA: You're not goin' around to that poolroom, Jim.

JIM (*irritably*): All right, all right. But a fellow is entitled to a little fun now and then, isn't he?

MARTHA: Not that sort.

JIM: And besides, father needs me back here in the field. The old mare was kind of sick this morning and we didn't get along very fast.

MARTHA: All we want you to do won't take long—not over twenty minutes at most. Go 'long now and get washed while I write the note to the bank.

(JIM *hesitates awkwardly as if about to say something, looks at* BETTY'S *purse in his hand, tightens his grip on it and starts toward the kitchen.*)

JIM (*going*): A fellow don't get any rest around this place. Between father and that old horse and all these errands I'm drove pretty near crazy. (*Exit.*)

MARTHA (*looking after him*): What's got into that boy? He didn't use to be this way—so cantankerous and all. And he wanted that piano just as much as the rest of us a little while ago. (*Taking ink bottle and paper from cupboard.*) Come on, Betty, tend to that buttermilk while I write this note. Stella, you can do the dishes, now the churnin's out of the way.

(*She goes into the kitchen, followed by* BETTY, *whose hands dance over the keys of an imaginary piano.*)

GRANDMA: 'Pears to me like Jim was mighty leary of orderin' that piano.

STELLA (*rising and feeling her way to the kitchen door*): Oh, Jim's all right, Grandma. He's just resentful at having one more chore to do.

GRANDMA: Mebbe so, mebbe so. Never can tell about boys. When they get the "I-don't-want-to's" or the "Gimmes" or the "Me-firsts" they just have to live through them like the whooping cough.

(STELLA *goes into the kitchen. The front door opens and* JOHN CURTIS *enters. He is a middle-aged man of medium stature, his hair graying and his shoulders a bit stooped. He wears overalls and carries a wide-brimmed straw hat. He is hot and perspiring and limps painfully upon his left leg.*)

JOHN (*sinking into a chair beside the table*): That's about the last straw. (*Rubs his leg.*)

GRANDMA: What's the matter, John? Did you hurt yourself?

JOHN: No, I ain't hurt bad except in the pocket book. The old mare fell dead on me and kind o' wrenched my knee a bit.

GRANDMA: Tct! Tct! Ain't that too bad! I'll get the arnicky for you. (*She rises.*)

JOHN: All right, ma. Gosh! It's just one thing after another. First, the flood in the Spring, and I couldn't get the corn in soon enough. Then a cool Summer and it wouldn't ripen. Then that darned corn borer got busy in the stalks. The wheat ain't more'n two-thirds a crop, and the price is fallin'. And now the old mare ups and dies on me. (*Trying to cheer up.*) Well, we'll manage somehow.

GRANDMA: One thing at a time, John. You got to rub that knee

before it gets stiff or it won't be good for nothin' but a poker. (*She goes into the bedroom.*)

(*Enter* BETTY *from the kitchen. She doesn't see her father at first and has evidently come just to picture the piano in the place of the cupboard, for she gazes wistfully at it as she wipes the churn-dash in her hands.*)

JOHN: Hello, sis!

BETTY: Why, daddy, what are you home for? It isn't dinner time yet.

JOHN: Oh, I hurt my knee a little when the old mare fell dead on me this morning. Grandma is gettin' the arnicky for me.

BETTY: I'm so sorry, daddy. What did the mare die of?

JOHN: I don't know. I guess she just got discouraged waitin' for the government to do something for the farmer.

BETTY: Want I should rub your knee, daddy?

JOHN: No, I can rub it. I need cheerin' more than I need rubbin'.

BETTY: Daddy, I got a secret that will cheer you up when you hear it.

JOHN: Let's have it.

BETTY: I can't tell you now, but it's something *fine*. You'll hear it —I mean you'll see it to-night.

JOHN: I need cheerin' now.

BETTY (*hesitating*): Do you think it would do you more good now than to-night?

JOHN: I couldn't feel any worse than I do now. But don't tell me if you oughtn't to.

BETTY: I'll tell. We're going to get a piano! To-day!

JOHN: A piano? For us? Did some one die and leave it to us?

BETTY: No, sir! We're buying it! Mother's butter money and my egg money.

JOHN: How much you got?

BETTY: A hundred dollars altogether. Isn't it fine?

JOHN: A hundred dollars! (*Half to himself.*) I could get a new horse for a hundred dollars. Or better yet, I could make the first payment on a tractor.

BETTY (*disappointed*): You don't seem so cheered up about it.

JOHN: Yes, I am, Betty. I'm certainly glad we got that hundred dollars. But I'm not so sure about the piano. We're havin' such hard times just now——

BETTY: Oh, but the piano's already ordered.

JOHN: Who ordered it?

BETTY: Mother. She gave Jim a note and the butter and eggs. He's going to get the money from the bank and pay it to the store and have the piano out here to-night!

JOHN: Where is Jim?

BETTY: He's gone to town. He ought to be there by this time. Aren't you glad about it, daddy?

JOHN: Yes, darlin', I *am* glad. And I want you to have your piano as much as any one. But I don't want you to go to the poor-house. They wouldn't take a piano to the poor-house, now, would they? Just you wait a minute. (*He limps to the telephone and calls the operator.*) Hello, Carrie, give me the bank. Yep, that's all I want to-day—just one bank.

BETTY (*alarmed*): What are you going to do, daddy?

JOHN: Tell your mother to come here, Betty. (BETTY *goes to the kitchen, weeping.*) Hello, this the bank? This is John Curtis. Has my boy Jim been there yet? No? (*Enter from kitchen,* MARTHA, *and from the bedroom,* GRANDMA, *the latter carrying a bottle of arnica. They stand listening.* MARTHA'S *back is stiffening and her face takes on a look of determination.*) Well, Jim was coming to draw out some money. Just tell him not to bother about that to-day, will you, and to hurry home with that

binder twine. Thanks. (*He hangs up the receiver and turns to face* MARTHA.)

GRANDMA: I smell a row. Well, a little excitement might be a relief after darnin' socks for a year.

MARTHA: Betty told me about the mare, John, and about your knee. I'm sorry. But why did you call up the bank? It wouldn't take Jim but a few minutes to do our errand.

JOHN: Sit down, Martha, and let me talk to you about that errand. (*They all sit.* MARTHA *and* JOHN *in center.* GRANDMA *gives her bottle to* JOHN *and takes her rocking chair.* JOHN *rolls up his left trouser leg and rubs his knee with the arnica as he talks.*)

MARTHA: There's nothing to be said about that errand, John. It's our money—Betty's and mine. We've saved it for three years. We are going to have that piano.

JOHN: I want you to have it, Martha. And I ain't the man to take the money away from you. I only want to borry it.

MARTHA: No, John. We won't lend it to you.

JOHN: Why not, Martha?

MARTHA: Because you couldn't pay it back, soon enough anyway.

JOHN: How soon?

MARTHA: Before these children get any older. We've waited long enough already.

JOHN: I know you've waited, Martha. And God knows I don't want you to wait a day longer than necessary. But it seems necessary.

MARTHA: Necessary for what?

JOHN: Necessary for a tractor.

MARTHA: No! You can't have our money for a tractor! (*Pleading.*) Please, John. You don't know how hard we've worked for that money. It would break Betty's heart—and mine.

JOHN: Now, Martha, listen to reason. I can't farm without tools, can I? You couldn't make butter if you didn't have a churn, could you?

MARTHA (*near to weeping*): But, John, you can't take our butter and egg money for your tools. You wouldn't do that. Don't you remember when we were married and before that how you talked about the farmers that never gave their wives any money of their own? You said it would be different with us. You promised that I should always have my butter and egg money to spend on the home.

GRANDMA: That's what they all say before they marry. John, your pa promised——

JOHN: Never mind, ma. This is different.

GRANDMA: That's just what he said after we was married.

JOHN: Martha, I don't want to take your money. I only want to borry it.

MARTHA: It would be the same as taking it. You couldn't pay it back.

JOHN: Now don't take on so. Listen to reason, I say.

MARTHA: I don't want to hear any reasonin' that takes away our piano.

JOHN: You ain't got it yet, so you wouldn't miss it.

MARTHA: For six years we've saved, John. Don't you remember what happened last time, three years ago, when we almost had the hundred—about Jim's leg and the doctor's bills. You said you would pay that back, and I wouldn't let you. Jim was our boy, and I was willing to spend the piano money for that. But the mare, and a new tractor—that's different. Oh, John, I couldn't! I just couldn't!

JOHN: If you would only be calm a minute, Martha, I could make you see things straighter. You ain't quite well, I guess.

MARTHA (*pulling herself together*): Say what you got to say; I'll listen. But I won't give in.

JOHN: If I could borry the money any place else I would. But I couldn't pay the interest on the mortgage, so the bank wouldn't lend me none. And there's no one else to go to. I ain't squandered any money, have I?

MARTHA: No. There ain't been any to squander.

JOHN: And it ain't my fault, is it, that the price of wheat and corn has been droppin' so low it hardly pays for the seed to plant 'em?

MARTHA: I didn't say it was your fault.

JOHN: And it ain't my fault, is it, that the President vetoed the only bill we've had to help the farmers?

MARTHA: No. What's that got to do with my piano money?

JOHN: It means that there is less money from crops, and *that* means that to buy a new tractor we got to borry the piano money.

MARTHA: Suppose there wasn't any piano money; then what would you do?

JOHN: If I couldn't get a tractor, or at least a new horse, I couldn't farm; and if I couldn't farm, I'd go bankrupt. Think of what it would mean, Martha, to hear the neighbors say, "There goes John Curtis; he's a failure." I couldn't stand that!

MARTHA: Is that all you got to say, John?

JOHN: I guess that's all.

MARTHA: Now you listen to me. You can't bear to have folks say you are a failure. I understand that. But I can't stand it to have the folks in town say of our children, "There's those Curtis kids; they're just ignorant country jakes."

JOHN: They ain't ignorant. They've been to school.

MARTHA: School ain't everything. They ought to have music and pictures and books. It's our job to see that they have them. But we've never had any music in this house, and no pictures, and mighty few books.

JOHN: Music and pictures and books are all right, Martha. I want the children to have them. But they are luxuries—and we've got to have bread before we can have luxuries.

MARTHA (*bursting out*): Luxuries! That's what you've always said! But it ain't so, John. The children *need* them. And *I* do. We are starved for them. You can starve for such things as well as for bread. Ain't there something in the Bible what says you can't live by bread alone? For seventeen years I've done the washing and the cooking and the baking. I've patched the clothes of the family. I've had just four hats since we was married. I ain't never had a vacation. Something inside me has been dyin', John.

JOHN (*moved*): I guess it's your love for me, Martha.

MARTHA (*softened*): How can you say that, John?

JOHN: God knows I wouldn't blame you. I ain't been able to do much for you. I guess I am a failure.

MARTHA (*going to him and kneeling by his side*): Oh, John, John! Don't say that! It ain't your fault. It's the way with most of the farmers. They don't get a square deal.

JOHN: But what am I goin' to do? What *am* I goin' to do?

GRANDMA: Keep rubbin' that knee, John. It'll freeze up on you if you don't.

MARTHA: There's nothing for you to do, John. (*With an effort.*) You can have the piano money. There ain't nothin' else to do.

JOHN: When you act that way about it, I ain't got the heart to take it. Maybe we just better give up, sell the farm an' move to the city. I could get a job in a factory.

MARTHA: No, John. I've thought of that often. It would be easier. But we are goin' to stick by the old homestead as long as we got our strength.

GRANDMA: You better compromise. Instead of gettin' either a tractor or a piano, if you put a bathroom in this house——

JOHN: Now, ma, don't start on that. We've had enough trouble——
(*Enter* JIM *by the kitchen door, followed by* BETTY *and* STELLA. *There is a look of grim determination about him and his fists are clinched.* MARTHA *rises quickly and faces him.*)

MARTHA: What is it, Jim? Why you lookin' so queer?

JIM (*squaring his shoulders*): There's no use beatin' about the bush, mother. There ain't any hundred dollars. I spent it, and I've come to take my medicine.

MARTHA (*aghast*): You *spent* it?

JOHN: What's that you're sayin'?

JIM: I spent it at cards, gamblin' in the poolroom in the village.

MARTHA: To-day? Just now?

JIM: No. All along. As you gave me the money, I took it to the poolroom and gambled with it.

MARTHA: But you couldn't. You put it in the bank. The bank book says so.

JIM: I wrote those things in the bank book myself. It had the eleven dollars in there when you gave it to me. I wrote in all the rest. The eleven is still there. But the rest is gone.

MARTHA: And Betty's egg money—the twenty dollars?

JIM (*shaking his head in misery*): That's gone, too. I lost it just now on a throw of the dice. I bet the whole thing trying to get back what I'd lost. (BETTY *bursts into tears.* STELLA *takes her in her arms and strokes her hair.*)

JOHN: You're a thief. That's what you are!

JIM: Yes, that's what I am. What are you going to do with me? Put me in jail?

MARTHA (*in agony*): Oh, God! I can't bear any more!

JIM (*his voice breaking*): I wish I was dead. I didn't realize—mother. Honest, I didn't.

MARTHA: But why, *why* did you do it, Jim?

JIM: You remember three years ago when you gave me that first butter to sell? Well, I sold it and was on my way to the bank when I passed Griffin's window. There was a necktie there I wanted. It was seventy-five cents. I didn't have any money of my own. I almost never did. I had heard of some of the fellows at the poolroom making money at cards. I thought I would risk it. So I got in a game. At first I won half a dollar. And then I began to lose, and the whole amount went. I didn't have the nerve to tell you. The next week I tried again, and so on week after week. Sometimes I made a little, but never enough to pay you back, so I kept at it. If——

JOHN: Get out of this house! We'll have no crooks here!

JIM (*turning to go*): I don't blame you. I'll go. If I had had a gun this morning I would have killed myself. (*Pausing.*) Why don't you call up the sheriff and put me in jail?

JOHN (*starting toward the telephone*): By heaven, I will!

MARTHA (*stopping him*): No! No! Wait, John! Think! He's our boy—our only son! It would ruin him!

JOHN: Well, he's ruined us, ain't he?

MARTHA: No! We're not ruined; we're just hard-hit and he's repented, John; he's repented!

JOHN: I could forgive him, if it was my money, but it was yours and Betty's.

JIM (*miserably*): I ain't got any excuse.

MARTHA (*going to* JIM): You've come and told us like a man, Jim. You wouldn't do it again, now would you?

JIM: I've learned my lesson, but that doesn't get you your piano.

MARTHA: That's worth more'n a piano.

GRANDMA: There wasn't goin' to be any piano, Jim. Tell him, Martha.

MARTHA: The old mare died, Jim. We would have had to use the money for a tractor.

JIM: Died? Nellie died? Gosh! Ain't we got trouble! And I made it all the worse. Go on, dad, call up the sheriff. I'll take my medicine.

MARTHA (*to* JOHN): See what a man he is?

JOHN: But what am I goin' to do? What *am* I goin' to do? I've *got* to have a tractor!

STELLA (*who has been listening tensely*): I want to say something if you will only listen to me. (*They all turn to her.*)

MARTHA: What is it, Stella?

STELLA: I've been saving my money from my basket weaving. I've got almost sixty dollars. Would that make a first payment on a tractor?

JIM: Don't! Not that! I can't stand it!

MARTHA (*to* STELLA): There ain't no call to do that, Stella; we can manage somehow.

STELLA: But I want to. It would help out, wouldn't it? I can weave some more baskets. Father needs his tractor *now*. I can wait for the other books, and I'd like to—if—if—father and Jim would—— (*She hesitates.*)

MARTHA: Come, John. If *we* can forgive him, can't *you?*

JOHN (*relenting*): You got a good mother, Jim.

JIM: What do you want me to do?

JOHN: Guess we better go out and bury the horse. Come on! (*He starts toward the door.* JIM *follows, touching* STELLA'S *shoulder gratefully but awkwardly as he passes her.*)

MARTHA: Jim! (*She opens her arms to him and he comes into them half sobbing. She kisses his hair.*) You're worth more than all the pianos in the world to me, boy!

JIM: I'll make it up to you, mother, and to Betty. Honest, I will! Gosh! I feel better already for gettin' it off my chest! (*Exit.*)

(BETTY *goes to* GRANDMA *and buries her head on the old lady's shoulder.* STELLA *opens her big book and begins to run her fingers over the lines.*)

MARTHA (*drying her eyes*): Now there won't be either music or books in this house.

STELLA: But we will be happy again and Jim won't ever go wrong that way again, and father will have a better chance to make the farm pay.

MARTHA: I can't seem to figure it out. I want you children to be cultured, like city folks.

GRANDMA: What is this here culture?

MARTHA: I don't know exactly, ma; it's knowin' what's about things you can't see.

GRANDMA: And you thought a piano would teach that?

MARTHA: Yes.

GRANDMA: Well, I guess you are something of a piano yourself, Martha.

STELLA: And you're a tractor, too, mother.

MARTHA (*her face lighting up*): What funny notions! You get me all flustered. Come on, Betty, let's get dinner.

(BETTY *lifts her head irresolutely from* GRANDMA'S *shoulder.*)

GRANDMA: You ain't licked, are you, Betty?

BETTY (*straightening up*): Not yet! Listen! (*A hen is heard cackling in the barnyard.*) Hear that cackle? It's a new egg! That's the first two cents on the new piano! I'm going to get it before it gets cold! (*She runs out.*)

MARTHA (*following her, pride shining in her face*): Bless her heart! Ain't she got spunk? (*Exit.*)

GRANDMA: Mebbe it's just as well not to get any more books, Stella. Too much readin' rots the mind. Anyway, you ain't read all that one yet. Go on with it.

STELLA (*reading as the curtain falls*): "Love suffereth long and is kind; love envieth not; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. . . ."

CURTAIN

THE DEATHLESS WORLD*

BY

J. M. S. TOMPKINS

*A prize of fifty guineas ($250.00) was recently offered by *The Weekly Westminster* of London for a one-act play. The committee that judged the competition included seven of the most eminent producers and critics in England. There were 800 entrants. The prize was awarded to "The Deathless World" by Joyce M. S. Tompkins.

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CHARACTERS

Guy Vane
Margaret Vane
Denis Wright, *Margaret's brother*
A Doctor
The Servant of the Dead
Two Wardens of the Holy Food

THE DEATHLESS WORLD

SCENE: *A room in which there is a curtained alcove, containing a couch. There is a glass door at back, leading to the open air; through this can be seen the figures of the characters before their entries. The room gives an effect of space, light, simple form and pure coloring. At a table sits* MARGARET, *reading. She is young, quiet in her manner and clothed in a straight gown of blue. She lifts her head suddenly from her reading and calls with suppressed excitement.*

TIME: A.D. 2300.

MARGARET: Guy, I have found something, a beautiful thing. Guy! (*Enter* GUY. *He also is young, wears a light shirt or tunic of some colored silk and carries a long cloak over his arm. She points to a page in the book which he takes from her.*)

MARGARET: Look. Look there.

GUY: Still reading those old books. (*Turns cover.*) "The Ring and the Book." Isn't that rather out of date?

MARGARET: Yes, it is quite out of date. That's what interests me—the difference between people then and now.

GUY: Poor beggars. I wonder how they bore to live?

MARGARET: They enjoyed it, I think. Not as we enjoy it. Not calmly, but with a keener, more nervous zest. That must have been because of the uncertainty of their enjoyment. They were all doomed, and no one knew when the doom would fall.

GUY: I know. I remember that when I first met the old books, it was when I was in the Sixth—it was that sense of precariousness, most of all, that made them difficult to understand. It was

like reading about a different race of beings—not one's own ancestors. Their whole sense of values was different. They had emotions that we don't feel—or don't feel in the same way. It stands to reason that if a man knows that every step he takes and every meal he eats is bringing him nearer to—well, to death (*using the word shyly and uncertainly*)—it must make a great difference. I remember once at school, they gave us a course on ancient civilization, and we read extracts from the Bible to illustrate it, and I came suddenly on the words: "The days of our age are threescore years and ten"; it made me cold.

MARGARET: Yes. It is difficult to realize. But it did produce marvellous poetry, poetry like this. We can't write it now, Guy.

GUY: No, that's true. We have to go back to the old authors before the Discoveries if we want great poetry—great emotional poetry. And, by Jove, their philosophy's fine at times—all mistaken of course, but the spirit is fine.

MARGARET: Doesn't it seem strange that the greatest of all discoveries, the discovery of the Holy Food (*both make a ceremonial gesture, touching forehead and heart as they do throughout the play when the food is mentioned*) should have cost us so beautiful a thing as poetry?

GUY: Well, you must pay a price for everything. The men of Browning's time couldn't build Cathedrals. But what's your discovery?

MARGARET (*finding the place*): "No work begun shall ever pause for death."

GUY: You have marked it, I see.

MARGARET: Look again.

GUY: No, I see now how faded the ink is. What's that in the margin?

MARGARET: John Dayborne, died, January 17th, 1987.

GUY: It's a woman's writing.

MARGARET: His wife's, or his mother's, perhaps.

GUY: Where did you get an old thing like that from? I hope it is not infectious.

MARGARET: Oh, no. I had it sterilized. Guy, think of that poor woman, all those hundreds of years ago, looking for comfort here.

GUY: Yes, dear. Well, that's all over now.

MARGARET (*slowly*): Yes. Death is over now—almost.

GUY: What are you thinking of? The criminals and idiots who die out of sight, in the islands? Or of those rare accidents by sea and air that we have not yet learned to guard against?

MARGARET: No, of my mother, who died when I was born. (*Standing up and facing him.*) Guy, I must have a child.

GUY: Margaret, dear, we've talked this over before. I can't dream of your taking such a risk.

MARGARET: The end is worth the risk.

GUY: Do you think so? Of course, it would be very nice for you to have a baby to play with—but it would be very expensive. Nobody but a specialist will undertake an operation like that nowadays.

MARGARET: I think we could manage it. Listen, Guy. I know you don't want a baby, as I do; but I know you'd be kind to it when it came, and you'd get fond of it, as my father did of me. They are queer, funny little things, I know, and it does give you a shock to see them at first. That's because we see so few of them. But you would get used to it quite soon. I was like that once.

GUY: It's the risk to you, Margaret. If anything went wrong——

MARGARET: No, listen, Guy. The old books say that there are only two moments when a man becomes wholly one with nature, and can feel and understand in himself the working of her great laws. That is when he creates, and when he dies. For us there

is no dying; we have climbed above that natural law; the seasons change, and the beasts and the woods perish round us, and we do not understand their melancholy or their change. For us there is nothing left but creation. Let me experience that. I want to feel, I want to understand.

GUY (*not taking her quite seriously*): Of course, dear—if it means all that to you—I suppose it does seem worth the risk. But I don't think there is a vacancy at present. No one has died for a long time, and when vacancies do occur they are always filled at once.

MARGARET (*falling in with his mood*): Then there must be a good many people wanting babies after all. You don't think we could get a special dispensation, since we are both beautiful and clever and healthy and of good family?

GUY: I am afraid not. We have to be very careful about population nowadays. The last few harvests in Russia have been bad, and the margin of supply is too small already.

MARGARET: We must wait then. Do you think me very strange to want this so much?

GUY: I love you and all your whims, my dear. When there is a vacancy we can talk it over again. (*Puts on his cloak.*)

MARGARET: Shall you be back this afternoon?

GUY: Yes. And Denis has promised to come in. He's trying out a new aeroplane to-day—a wonderful new invention that his firm has got hold of. He swears she will do three hundred. I expect he'll be full of it.

MARGARET: I never like it when Denis tries out new machines.

GUY: Why? There's no real danger to speak of.

MARGARET: No. I suppose it's because I am a dead woman's child that I think so much of death.

GUY: You must not let yourself brood on it. It's unhealthy. I shall take you out to see the dancing to-night, and we'll walk back

through the pine-woods. That ought to brush away the cobwebs, you old antiquarian.

MARGARET: Good-by. (*A knock is heard, and figures show dimly through the glass.*) Just see who that is, as you go out.

(*He goes. A pause. He returns and stands obviously uncertain what to say.*)

MARGARET: What is it?

GUY: Bad news, I'm afraid, but we hope it's not dangerous.

MARGARET: Tell me quickly.

GUY: Denis has had to make a forced landing in the meadow opposite, and at the last moment, the whole thing gave way, and he crashed. Luckily, two of the Wardens were in the meadow at the time. He's conscious, and they are bringing him in here.

MARGARET (*quiet*): Yes; they had better lay him on the couch.

(*Two white-cloaked and hooded* WARDENS *come in carrying* DENIS *on a stretcher.*)

DENIS (*faintly but clearly*): Hello, Margaret. Sorry to frighten you like this.

MARGARET: I'm not frightened; don't talk, lie still.

(*They take him to the couch in the alcove.*)

DENIS: That will do, thank you.

WARDEN (*to* MARGARET): My companion will stay here, while I fetch a doctor.

MARGARET: Thank you. Is it serious?

WARDEN: It was a bad fall. My companion has the anodyne. Your brother need not suffer. (*Exit.*)

DENIS (*talking excitedly*): Guy—I wish you would get a message through to my firm, and tell them what has happened. Say how awfully sorry I am, but I really don't think it was my fault. The body wasn't strong enough to stand the strain of the speed, and when I tried to land it just crumpled up like matchwood.

It's beastly disappointing; but I don't think I could have helped it. Do you mind?

GUY (*awkwardly*): Of course I'll go. And don't talk so much, old fellow, or you'll wear yourself out. Just lie still. You'll be all right, Margaret, with the Warden here?

(*She nods and remains standing by the table. Exit* GUY.)

DENIS: Warden—it's just beginning. Give me that stuff.

2D WARDEN: It would be best if you could manage to bear the pain for a little. The anodyne tends to weaken the action of the heart.

DENIS: How can I bear it? Do you know what it's like? I can't, I tell you. I'd sooner be dead. (*Holds out his arm; the* WARDEN *makes an injection.*) I suppose I should be dead now if you two had not been in the meadow?

2D WARDEN: Probably.

DENIS: Ugh, a near shave. Dead—what a thought. I'm awfully sorry to upset you like this, Margaret. Don't look so frightened; it will be all right. (*She goes over to him for the first time.*) It is bound to be all right. I only hope it won't be a long job. I suppose I shall have to miss the trials next month, but he must patch me up in time for the race round the world in July. Do you know what I thought of first when I came back to consciousness in that awful hell of pain?

MARGARET: Tell me.

DENIS: I thought I was done for, you see, and I thought—— Only another hundred years or so to complete the conquest of the air —and I sha'n't be there to see it. I sha'n't—— (*The pain takes him; he gasps.*) Give me that stuff.

2D WARDEN: The doctor is just coming.

DENIS: Give it me, I say.

(*The injection is repeated. The* DOCTOR, *a man of*

about forty, comes in with 1ST WARDEN. MARGARET *withdraws from the bed.*

DOCTOR: Good-morning. Ah, there's the patient, I see. (*To* WARDENS.) Come in with me.

(*They enter the alcove and draw the curtains.* MARGARET *stands by the table. After a moment* GUY *comes in.*)

GUY: Doctor come, dear?

MARGARET: Yes; Dr. Asgill.

GUY: What does he say?

MARGARET: He's making an examination now, Guy. I feel as if something horribly indecent were going on there—something loathsome.

GUY: Don't think that way, Margaret; think that it's help.

MARGARET: He's terribly hurt. He had to have the anodyne twice while you were out.

GUY: Remember, Dr. Asgill is one of the best doctors on the continent. (*A pause.*)

MARGARET: I suppose it was like this when I was born.

GUY: It was like this for hundreds and thousands of years, in every house and for every man before the Discoveries, when the human race was ignorant, and think now how seldom—how very seldom our doctors fail.

(DOCTOR *appears at curtains and beckons* GUY.)

DOCTOR: Vane—can you get your wife out of the room for a little while?

GUY (*to* MARGARET): Dear, the Doctor wants us to go for a little.

MARGARET: You are not going to hurt him?

DOCTOR: I give you my word I am not. I only want to have a talk with him, without any one else present.

MARGARET: Very well.

(She and GUY *go out, and the* WARDENS *retire to the door.* DENIS *is lying with a rug over him; his airman's kit has been pulled off and lies on the floor.)*

DENIS: So you are not going to hurt me, eh?

DOCTOR: No; I am going to inject some more anodyne into you, and then we are going to talk.

DENIS: The Warden said the stuff might affect the heart.

DOCTOR: We must take some risks.

DENIS: I'm pretty badly smashed, aren't I?

DOCTOR: Yes; you are pretty badly smashed.

DENIS: What's gone?

DOCTOR: The back chiefly. The skull's cracked, too. And other things. It's a wonder you're alive.

DENIS: Can you keep me alive?

DOCTOR: Yes, for a time; perhaps for a long time.

DENIS: Can you heal me?

DOCTOR: No; Science cannot heal you.

DENIS: You mean that I must always lie like this—forever—stupefied by anodyne, nursed and watched and waited on—forever?

DOCTOR: That is what I mean—more or less.

DENIS: What time is it?

DOCTOR: About eleven.

DENIS: Not half an hour since I started my flight. But that was a different man, with a different future. I can't realize it. I can't believe it.

DOCTOR: I want you to understand that future. I cannot exclude pain from it.

DENIS: Pain such as I have felt?

DOCTOR: In some measure, yes.

DENIS: But the anodyne.

DOCTOR: The human body cannot stand more than a certain amount of anodyne. There would be intervals—frequent intervals—of pain.

DENIS: Why do you tell me this?

DOCTOR: It is the custom of my profession, when a patient is found to be incurable, to tell him so, before too great suffering has dimmed his mind or impaired his will, in order that he may make a choice.

DENIS: What choice?

DOCTOR: Between life and death.

DENIS: Death! (*With sudden suspicion.*) You are the servant of the State. Is that choice mine?

DOCTOR: It is in your hands absolutely.

DENIS: But are you sure there is no cure? It is incredible. We can cure everything nowadays. What would other doctors say?

DOCTOR: Consult them if you wish. No doctor could say otherwise than I do.

DENIS: And day by day, as I waited, I should be growing more and more incapable of choice. If I should decide to live—to bear this life you offer me—might it not happen that in time, as science advances, some cure might be found for me—some alleviation even——

DOCTOR: It is a possibility.

DENIS: Could one face life for a possibility? I suppose so.

DOCTOR: There is another possibility, which I must not conceal from you. The injury to your skull may affect your brain.

DENIS: You mean I shall go mad? Become an idiot?

DOCTOR: Of course I cannot be certain.

DENIS: But you are certain of mutilation, helplessness, drugged stupefaction and—torment? (DOCTOR *bows.*) A hundred years

of that for a possibility—even if I did not go mad. Custom might break me to it, I suppose; yet to be broken to such a custom! Doctor, what do we know of death?

DOCTOR: Of the state of the soul in death, you mean? Science has nothing to say of that. Too few people die nowadays. We cannot experiment.

DENIS: Do you think we end?

DOCTOR: I cannot tell.

DENIS: There is no proof that we do not?

DOCTOR: No.

DENIS: O God! What horrible finality; and this morning life was infinite. I called out "O God!" That's an exclamation we inherit, and use without thinking of its meaning. Do you believe it has any meaning? Who is master of this world?

DOCTOR: Man. Man is the master, though his rule is still imperfect. Nature challenges it, and nature is not yet wholly subdued. Man is lord of life, but he is not lord of death.

DENIS: I feel that in myself. I have passed in half an hour from lordship to lowest servitude. I no longer control. I am controlled. I am death's unclaimed chattel. His ring is round my neck. And yet—even on these terms—I could hold to life for a time?

DOCTOR: You could.

DENIS: Doctor, how would you choose?

DOCTOR: I am not allowed to advise you. The choice must be your own.

DENIS (*with growing excitement*): I am a sick man. How can I weigh a certain hell of pain against the unknown, unexplored state of death? How can I balance the possibilities—the horrible possibilities you have put before me? Man—man; I want your advice—I demand it. How would you choose?

DOCTOR (*sharply*): Lie still; do not excite yourself; lie still; drink this.

DENIS: I see what you mean. That possibility I can't avoid. . . . I will not suffer the disgrace of insanity. My race and stock shall not be so dishonored in me. I will not be sent to the islands to wait in ignorance, and helplessness, for a slow death. . . . I'll die!

DOCTOR: You are sure?

DENIS: I will die, Doctor.

DOCTOR: I think you have made a wise choice.

DENIS: When will you kill me?

DOCTOR: When would you like the operation? In two or three days? I should not advise you to wait longer.

DENIS: Soon—immediately. You can do it painlessly?

DOCTOR: Entirely painlessly. To-day, then?

DENIS: Yes, now.

DOCTOR: There are some formalities to be gone through first. I must have your written statement that this is your voluntary decision.

DENIS: Prop me up and I'll write it. Waiting would be the worst. Doctor, you've seen death?

DOCTOR: Yes, I've seen it.

DENIS: Have you ever seen in it any signs of life?—As though another sort of being were germinating behind it? No—I see you haven't.

DOCTOR: My eyes are not trained for such a search. I see no life in a tree in winter.

DENIS: The analogy's faulty. We leave the tree standing. You want this witnessed, don't you? Guy, Margaret. (*They enter.*) Will you witness this, please?

GUY (*shocked and helpless*): Death!

MARGARET: I knew it. (*She goes and kneels at the foot of the couch, hiding her face.*)

GUY: But—Denis—Doctor—can't something be done—it's impossible.

DENIS: Don't fuss; for life's sake, don't fuss.

GUY: I'm sorry. Denis, I'm desperately sorry. (*Stops, not knowing what to say.*)

DOCTOR: I shall want two witnesses for the license. Will you come with me, Vane? One of the Wardens will make the second, and one we must leave in charge. It won't be a long business, Wright. You'll come?

GUY: If I must; but I don't like leaving the house just now.

DENIS: What on earth could you do if you stayed?

GUY: Nothing, I suppose. Very well, Doctor, I'll come.

(*They go out. There is silence.* DENIS *holds out his arm to the* WARDEN, *who makes an injection and then retires to the door.* MARGARET *does not move.*)

DENIS: Poor Guy; he doesn't know what to say; the situation is so strange, that no one knows how to behave. We've lost the tradition. Guy looks at me as if I were something holy and unclean—a dedicated victim to some obscene god. Do you know, Margaret, that you and I are the loneliest people in the world to-day? We are facing something that almost nobody faces. And yet three hundred years ago every one did.

MARGARET: I can't be without you. What will become of you?

DENIS: I'm trying not to think about it too much. I wonder what all the others—the ancestors—thought about it—what the criminals think about it nowadays! I should like to talk to a criminal. I wonder if I am behaving as I ought? It's difficult to improvise.

MARGARET (*lifting her head*): I thought I should be better than this

if it ever happened. I thought I should be able to comfort you. I used to think a great deal about it. And now it has happened I'm no good. I wish I knew what was ahead of you.

DENIS: Nobody knows. They've forgotten to find out. It didn't concern them.

MARGARET (*tentatively*): I'm sure it was wrong—to refuse to die was wrong. My heart is torn for you—yet somehow I think—I'm feeling for my thought—that you are enviable. You are doing the will of life—we are refusing it. How can we know life, if we don't know death?

DENIS: I can only think of you and me. Even my work seems small and far away.

MARGARET: We have broken the rhythm of life, which has endured from the beginning of the world. Before the Discoveries, the generations flowed like waves. Each in turn rolled up, and gathered to a crest, and broke; and then came the next riding over it. Like waves. In those old days they kept the rhythm. They profited by death and submitted to it. We profit by it. We live by death—we eat death, and are clothed and taught and defended by death—but we don't submit to it or accept it. You have returned to your allegiance.

DENIS: I've been beaten back. To mend a rhythm—it's dark comfort, dear. Still, I'm glad you have it.

MARGARET: Oh—sometimes death seems beautiful, and sometimes loathsome. I can't keep it steady before my eyes.

DENIS: Come closer, Margaret. Let me speak. I have always loved you, but I've never known it so well as now. There seemed so much time for loving, that one put it off. And now that I look back on my life and my work, this loving you seems almost the most important thing in it. It humbles us, a little—brings us low—this death.

MARGARET: I love you, too. What I said is true. You and I are being drawn back into the rhythm of nature. It flows through

us. It beats in our blood. Can't you feel it, Denis? As though some hindrance were removed—some discord resolved.

DENIS: No, I can't. Everything is dark before me.

MARGARET: You want so much to live?

DENIS: Live? I tell you, Margaret—I would ransom myself at any price—any price at all—even with your suffering—it's true—except the one price that is asked of me—a broken, helpless, panic-struck existence.

MARGARET: I see you are speaking the truth. We get to know strange things about ourselves.

DENIS: Go away, Margaret. Fly from the sight of mortality. Be wise and go. You will never be able to forget it. It will haunt you always. Go back to your fellows in immortality—your undying mates—you prosperous sister.

MARGARET: If your mortality could infect me, I would draw in infection with every breath. Shall I die, too, Denis? Shall I promise you to die? Oh, you are enviable in this, that you will not know that dreadful old age through which I must pass, if I am to reach death. Shall I come?

DENIS: Where? Where? Oh, my dear, I'm a forlorn adventurer who has lost heart. I see death shames our minds as well as our bodies. I am afraid of this cold, empty, speechless darkness.

MARGARET: I love you, I love you. Touch me. I'm warm.

DENIS: I have never felt this strength of love before. I must believe its strength, even while I see that it is vain. Margaret, I hope now you will be able to have that little baby you wanted. There ought to be no difficulty about it now. I'd like you to have it. I should feel as if I were leaving something behind.

MARGARET: Does that help?

DENIS: Yes. I don't understand why, but it does. Death and birth—it's almost like the beasts. They'll be coming soon. Mar-

garet—what did the old people think of death, those who were familiar with it? You know, you've read them.

MARGARET: Some thought that the end of life was the end of all; some that the conscious mind persisted beyond death, in another form of being.

DENIS: What do you think?

MARGARET: I don't know. Some said that for the human spirit to be in life was to be in exile; that life was an atmosphere in which it could exist but could not draw free breath; that its true atmosphere and abiding place is death.

DENIS: Read me something out of the old books, such as they used to read. We might as well keep up the forms.

(MARGARET *fetches a book.*)

MARGARET (*reads*): "Man that is born of woman hath but a short time to live and is full of misery. He cometh up and is cut down like a flower: he fleeth as it were a shadow, and never continueth in one stay. In the midst of life we are in death; of whom may we seek for succor but of thee, O Lord?" How many mouths have read this to how many dying ears, and for how long have the words been silent?

DENIS: They are coming. Kiss me. How we have wasted time. You'll call your little baby Denis?

(*Enter* DOCTOR, GUY *and* WARDEN. MARGARET *goes back to the table.*)

DOCTOR: We have the license. You'll act as witness, Vane?

GUY (*holding himself in hand*): Certainly.

DENIS: I'd very much rather you went and explained matters to my firm, Guy. The Wardens can witness the operation.

GUY: No; I can't leave Margaret, or you, Denis.

DENIS: Oh, yes, you can. Margaret knows better than either of us what to do and feel. She has some strange ancestral knowledge. And you can't help me. You are in the way here, Guy.

GUY: Margaret? What do you wish?

MARGARET: I would rather be alone, please, Guy.

DENIS: Good-by. (GUY *shakes hands silently and goes.*) Let me see the license: "License to give death to Denis Wright." How do you do it?

DOCTOR: Poison. It is quite painless.

DENIS: Give it me. Are you staying, Margaret?

MARGARET: If you must bear to die, I can bear to see you die.

DOCTOR: There will be nothing to distress you. Death will come like sleep, with slumbrous ease.

DENIS: Good-night then. Remember, Margaret. Denis the mortal drinks to Denis the immortal. (*Drinks.*)

DOCTOR: Now turn on your side and sleep. (*Enters the alcove and draws the curtain. A short pause. He emerges.*) There is absolutely no pain, Mrs. Vane.

MARGARET: What is it like?

DOCTOR: A slower and fainter breathing, a slower and fainter pulse, until both cease.

MARGARET: No harder than that . . . (*She looks.*) What a little hold we have on life. . . . Doctor—how old are you?

DOCTOR: I was one of the first to profit by the Discoveries: I must be nearly three hundred years old. One forgets time.

MARGARET: Are you not tired of living?

DOCTOR: Tired? No. There is always work and pleasure and the progress of science to watch. Life no longer excites me I admit; but as one grows older one gets more impersonal—something between a god and a machine. That's a harsh doctrine for youth.

MARGARET: I am young of course; but for me the thought of the long bright days has something appalling in it. It oppresses me.

DOCTOR: You will learn to be proud of it—proud that you are stable

like the mountains—not perishable and fleeting, like this year's leaves or the birds in them.

MARGARET: I have heard that the mountains, too, are perishable—that in fact they do hourly perish, though we cannot see their decay—beaten upon by storms and gnawed by ice and sun.

DOCTOR: That is true. And it may be that we too shall perish as they do, but according to their manner and measure. It is not long since the Discoveries; how do we know whether what we have discovered is in truth immortality or only an immense prolongation of life? It may be that a thousand years is our span, it may be that the end of the world shall find us still enduring. I am curious. I shall live to know.

MARGARET: And at the end of the world, when the earth slides into the sun—what shall befall us then?

DOCTOR: Death.

MARGARET: In the end we cannot avoid that dark journey of the spirit?

DOCTOR: Not unless by then we have learnt to build ships that will sail in space, and colonize another planet.

MARGARET: Flight—still flight—from what was once the common experience of all.

DOCTOR: It is now the common immunity.

MARGARET: That's not so strong a bond. There was more true comradeship between my brother and myself during those last minutes, when we were like two shipwrecked persons, clinging to a raft, with the black waters under us, than in all our lives before. The great things of the mind shone out like stars. We were ignorant and humble and afraid, as we had never been before, and yet there was a strength in us that was not desperation. I don't understand, and there is no one to whom I can speak. In the old days I could have said: "This is the forfeit of the flesh and the will of nature; it is not strange or unknown, it is a common loss; it befalls us all." And that would have been

comfort. But now that fellowship is gone, and I am quite alone. What we have lost in losing our deaths. (DOCTOR *goes to look at* DENIS; *and returns.*) Do you not think we should have refused this Discovery?

DOCTOR: I am sure that we should not refuse any discovery that science brings. That would be flight indeed.

MARGARET: We cannot refuse the knowledge, but we can refuse to profit by it.

DOCTOR: Why should we?

MARGARET: Because the price is too great; because in overcoming death, we have emptied life of its values.

DOCTOR: We have based it on new values. That was inevitable.

MARGARET: They are not worth the old. Life is a moving thing; its direction is onward; and we have banked it into a still and stagnant pool.

DOCTOR: You mistake; with us too it moves onward. Read the old books—read of the barbarous laws of our ancestors—their squalid houses, their starved minds and pining bodies. Have we not moved? And why? Because we garner our knowledge and our experience, and bake bread ourselves of our own corn, instead of bequeathing that office to our heirs. We have moved because of the Discoveries.

MARGARET: I have read and I know. And I think this smooth and easy movement of the brain is ill bought with the sloth of the heart.

DOCTOR: You speak like the ignorant old physicians, and the old ignorant poets.

MARGARET: It is a figure. I know there is no distinction. But I have bought knowledge in this last half-hour; I am richer than I was; and this knowledge should be within the reach of all. Doctor, I think the Holy Food (*she makes no gesture*) eats out our souls.

DOCTOR: Mrs. Vane, that is sacrilege. You are courting the death you speak of but do not understand. (*Looks toward* WARDENS, *who have withdrawn to the door.*) Be thankful you are not overheard. You think of death as a desirable goal, but have you forgotten the evil ways to death—pain and fear and the bitter slow way of old age?

MARGARET: I do fear old age, and yet I have never seen it.

DOCTOR: You may see it to-day if you will. In a little time the Servant of the Dead will be here. She is one, as befits her office, to whom the Holy Food has been denied—and she is now old. (*A knock.*) She is here. (*He opens to a cloaked and hooded woman. Neither he nor the* WARDENS *approach or touch her.*) Wait, while I see if all is ready. (*He and the* WARDENS *enter the alcove and return.*) Go in.

MARGARET: What has she to do?

(*The old woman enters alcove.*)

DOCTOR: To compose and straighten the dead body.

MARGARET: He is dead then? (DOCTOR *bows.*) But that is an honorable task.

DOCTOR: The magistrates do not think so, since they have allotted it to a criminal.

MARGARET: A criminal? What was her crime?

DOCTOR: Sacrilege. In her youth she profaned the Holy Food and the bowl it is borne in.

MARGARET: Why?

DOCTOR: I have never heard. Speak with her if you will, and learn if age is sweet. I must go with the witnesses and report the success of the operation. You are not afraid to be left alone?

MARGARET: No. Good-by, Doctor, and thank you.

DOCTOR: Trust time, Mrs. Vane. (*Goes out with* WARDENS.)

MARGARET (*to* OLD WOMAN, *who comes out of alcove, folding*

DENIS' *flying suit*): Won't you take off your cloak? It is close in here.

OLD WOMAN: You are not afraid, then, to look upon the face of age?

MARGARET: I am very curious. (OLD WOMAN *removes hood and cloak.*) It is not terrible. It is furrowed like the mountains, and pale like flowers in winter, and without light. It is not terrible.

OLD WOMAN: And yet sometimes I get to seem terrible to myself. That is because I am alone here. On the islands one is not alone, and so one is not afraid.

MARGARET: The islands. That is where the condemned are sent to await death. Is it very terrible—that waiting for death?

OLD WOMAN: We forget it most of the time. I remember it more here among you undying. But next year I shall be sent back to the islands, and when I see my children and grandchildren, it won't trouble me any longer. They say one of them favors me. (*Shyly; and getting no response, turns back to the alcove.*)

MARGARET (*after a pause*): Servant of the Dead—tell me, will you tell me why you profaned the Holy Food? Was it for fear of everlasting life—and scorn of it?

OLD WOMAN: It was just foolishness. It's so long ago, and seems so strange, now. Foolishness. There was a young man courting me, and after a while he left me for another girl. She will be looking almost as young as yourself, still, ma'am, I suppose. He was a Warden of the Holy Food. Young blood is hot, ma'am, and when I stood in the Hall of Assembly to take the bowl from his hands, I grew quite wild, and poured the food out on the stones. I was a well-looking girl, ma'am; they say my eldest grandchild favors me.

MARGARET: And so you were condemned to death?

OLD WOMAN: Yes, they sent me to the islands. I remember, I was very miserable and lonely, until I met my husband.

MARGARET: Was he under sentence, too?

OLD WOMAN: No, ma'am, he was born in the islands, and those who are born there, you know, have their choice of mortality and immortality. But only those who choose mortality may stay on the islands.

MARGARET: How do they choose?

OLD WOMAN: Some one way and some another. Mine have mostly followed their father.

MARGARET: Were you happy in the islands, Servant of the Dead?

OLD WOMAN: There's peace and trouble, bad times and good times. One is happy and unhappy. But those who are mortal cannot be happy here.

MARGARET: Why did you come back, then?

OLD WOMAN: I had lost my husband and thought a change would do me good; so I came to be Servant of the Dead in this City. Next year, when I am seventy, they will send me back, and I shall be glad to go. To be mortal among the immortal and old among the ever-young—it's hard, ma'am. One lacks company. Few speak to me as kindly as you do; I'm unclean.

MARGARET: Do you regret your mortality?

OLD WOMAN: It puzzles me to answer that question. But, ma'am, I wonder, is it right to live forever? I know the Book says we shall live forever (we still read the Book on the islands, ma'am), but mustn't we die first? "That which thou sowest is not quickened except it die." We are meant to die, I think.

MARGARET: I feel it too, but why? Why?

OLD WOMAN: It's nature. I lost one of my little ones, poor dear. I grieved, but afterwards I wouldn't have had it not happen. I knew more about my man and more about myself.

MARGARET: You are old and frail, but talking to you is like holding my hands to a fire.

OLD WOMAN: You don't know warmth if you don't know cold. You feel quite different about life when you have seen death.

MARGARET: You are not afraid?

OLD WOMAN: Yes—I'm afraid. I was afraid of my man, and afraid of the birth of my first child. I'm afraid. But the old folk on the islands are mostly good to one another. I shall have good company till I die, and afterwards as well, I dare say. Excuse me, ma'am, but you're proud here. You set yourselves above nature. You're too proud to die, and too proud to believe in God. You don't need God. You don't need each other—not as I needed my man when my little one died. It's need that brings us low, and it's need that lifts us up. It may be my old wits wandering, ma'am, but it seems to me that in trying to be more than human you have become less than human. There, I've been talking too much, but to be here alone makes one think, and it's a relief to talk to some one. It's your brother, isn't it, ma'am?

MARGARET: Yes, it's my brother.

OLD WOMAN: He's quite at peace, dear. You needn't be afraid to look at him.

MARGARET (*shaken*): To look?

OLD WOMAN: In a minute or two, dear. I'll call you.

(*She withdraws. A distant bell strikes 12.* MARGARET *spreads the table ceremoniously with a special cloth and two bowls. The* OLD WOMAN *appears at the curtains and beckons.* MARGARET *hesitatingly enters. After a moment they come out.*)

MARGARET: That's not Denis. Now I am quite sure that that is not Denis. He is not here. How beautiful—to be so sure. (*To* GUY, *who comes in.*) Guy, come and see (*with soft urgency*), come and see Denis.

GUY: Margaret, you have not been looking on death. Come away, dear, come away.

MARGARET: You don't understand. It's beautiful.

GUY: Margaret, wake up, Margaret.

MARGARET: The assurance, I mean—the certainty that that is not Denis—not all of him. Believe me, I should like to die one day.

GUY: Hush, dear. (*With a glance round.*) The Wardens will soon be here. (*Gestures to* OLD WOMAN, *who withdraws.*) Dearest, listen; you will learn to forget—you will learn to be glad that you have forgotten. Look forward, Margaret. We will have that little baby. It will fill your time and your thoughts. I shall love it.

MARGARET: I'll not bear any child that is not mortal. I'm not mad. I have seen death, Guy, and I am a little afraid of it, but not much. I am older since I have seen it, but I am stronger and richer. I want that strength and that richness for my baby. Guy—Guy. Let us die. Let us grow quietly old and die. Let us return to mortality, and bear a child, and see it growing into strength and beauty, assuming our virtues, as our flesh grows too weak to sustain them. Let us die.

GUY: You are overwrought, dear. Margaret—my wife—I love you. Don't think of your grief—think of my love.

MARGARET: You love me as one immortal loves another—calmly and serenely, without fear and without growth. I want the love of mortality—that cresset in the dark, that song in the gale—the love with which my mother loved my father when she bore Denis, when she bore me; the love that is need—the love that is fear and yet assurance. You do not love me as the mortals love.

GUY: I love you better, for I love you forever.

MARGARET: I am not ready to live in this eternal sunlight. I want the dark and the fire, Guy—couldn't you bear to see me grow old?

GUY (*shudders*): Don't talk of it. It's profanation. That slow enfeeblement, that hideous weakening and stooping—the obscure eyes, the pouched cheeks, the cracked voice—no.

MARGARET: You are frightened of it, because you haven't seen it.

You speak from pictures. It's not terrible. I could bear to see you old, Guy—let's refuse the Holy Food.

GUY: And be treated like lunatics and blasphemers, and sent to the islands.

MARGARET: Should we? I shouldn't care. Island air is good for babies.

GUY: Margaret, you are not sane. You are not asking this in earnest?

MARGARET: In deadly earnest, Guy. We have sold our birthright. We are born to feel fear and to deny fear. That is our inherited quarrel. If we refuse it, it is not because we have destroyed fear, but because fear has not conquered us.

GUY: We have destroyed the causes of fear.

MARGARET: That is because we are afraid of fear.

GUY: Fear makes the soul shrunken and ignoble.

MARGARET: Oh, you are so far right that I cannot argue with you. And yet—and yet—what we hold securely we hold lightly.

GUY: To hold lightly is a grace of life. Would you have us clutch our loves?

MARGARET: Yes—till the palms bleed. When we fear to lose a thing, then first we examine and seek to know its value. When we fear greatly to lose ourselves, then first we seek to know our own value. And if we find it is not worth the fear—then comes shame. And shame and fear are great instruments of growth.

GUY: They have distorted you. You have grown into something alien and strange to me. You frighten me. I can't understand you. You would give away all you have—life and youth and love, for what? For some dark, uncertain future? What do you know of this future?

MARGARET: Very little. Less than of you. And I can never know more of it, or of you, until I have given myself bound and defenceless into its hands. We ought to die, even if death were all.

GUY: Margaret. This is madness. It is a mad argument.

MARGARET: Death is not the solution of an argument. It is an act of faith. Silence and darkness are our true elements. We thrive in them. They are the matrix of all things—the primal figments of God. They circumscribe us, they penetrate us. Oh, listen—what is our consciousness but a momentary break in their rhythm—the leap of a fish which slides back into its element?

GUY: You are raving. Wake up, wake up.

MARGARET: Cannot we trust them? There is silence between all men in their loneliness, and they trust it. Our souls are dark, to each other, and we trust them. Silence frees us from the falseness of speech, and darkness from the illusion of vision. Let us trust them. Let us be borne on this current and flow with this rhythm.

GUY: Margaret, come back to me. You speak like some terrible voice out of the past—some prehistoric clamor from old caverns —the comfortless cry of old unharnessed winds. Margaret, come back.

MARGARET: They are beautiful—death and silence and the dark. They alone bear the unbroken vigil of God. They alone are integral beauty. What is speech but broken breath; what is vision but broken light? All our beauties are but the splinters and shards of that beauty. For the sake of our need, for the sake of our desire—for the soul's need of our child—Guy—die with me.

GUY: Don't ask me. I can't. I can't.

MARGARET: From the night of the womb to the night of the tomb—why should we run except between those two goals? Guy.

GUY: No, I tell you, no. (*She leaves him.*) Margaret.

MARGARET: Don't touch me. I am not yours. I have touched death. I am all Denis's now.

GUY: Quiet, dear, quiet.

MARGARET: I am quiet. I see I must die alone.

(*A bell is heard approaching the door.*)

GUY: That is the bell of the Wardens. They are bringing the Holy Food. Think how, all through this city and all through the world, at this hour, the human race draws to the source of life, in markets, in assemblies, in lonely places, feeding heart and brain with the sacred essence. Come, Margaret.

(*They go to the table. Bell sounds near. The* WARDENS *enter, bearing a flagon ceremoniously.*)

WARDENS: Receive duly the Holy Food, the source of life.

GUY (*holding his bowl*): I receive.

(MARGARET *saying nothing, holds her bowl.*)

WARDEN: In the name of wisdom and light.

GUY (*drinking*): In the name of wisdom and light.

MARGARET: In the name of death.

(*Breaks bowl.*)

GUY: Margaret!

WARDEN: I arrest you for sacrilege.

MARGARET: I am quite ready.

CURTAIN

EL CRISTO *

BY

MARGARET LARKIN

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CHARACTERS

Jose Valdez, *a young Mexican*
Manuel Valdez, *his uncle*
His Father
His Mother
Rosalia
Ricardo

Scene: *The interior of a morada, secret meeting place of Los Penitentes. Just outside of Taos, New Mexico.*

Time: *The Present. Late Afternoon. Good Friday.*

The order of Los Hermanos Penitentes (the Penitent Brothers) was founded in Spain some three hundred years ago. It had none of the scourge in its original plan. Its members met for religious study and conversation. The seeds of the order were brought to New Mexico by the Franciscan friars with the Spanish conquistadores. By slow degrees the once godly order shrank and grew deformed until the monstrosity of the present fanaticism has devolved. The Penitentes, with their credo founded on the whip and the cross as instruments of penance, still carry on their weird ceremonies in New Mexico.

EL CRISTO

The interior of a morada or secret meeting house of Los Penitentes, a flagellant offshoot of the Roman Catholic Church. At the right against the wall, an altar, covered with a black cloth. A large crucifix above it, and candles lighted. In the left corner, eight or ten rough wooden crosses of different sizes, one of them very large. Left front, a table with crude benches at two sides. A pile of spiny cactus torture whips is on the table. The curtain discovers JOSE, *a slender Mexican, kneeling before the altar, praying.* MANUEL, *a man of about forty years, with very large eyebrows and mustaches, sits on the bench at the end of the table, regarding* JOSE *over his shoulder.*

JOSE:

God the Father of Heaven, have mercy on us,
God the Son, Redeemer of the World, have mercy on us,
God the Holy Ghost, have mercy on us,
Holy Trinity, One God, have mercy on us,
Holy Mary, pray for us,
Holy Mother of God, pray for us,
Mother of Christ, pray for us,
Mother of Christ, pray for us,
Mother of Divine Grace, pray for us,
——— pray for us—— (*Turns to* MANUEL.)

MANUEL (*prompting*):

Mother most pure——

JOSE:

Mother most pure, pray for us,
Mother most chaste, pray for us,
Mother of our Savior, pray for us—— (*Pause. He crosses himself, turns and sits at the foot of the altar.*) Manuel!

MANUEL: Um?

JOSE: Who was it proposed me?

MANUEL: How should I know, chiquillo? I am not of the Council.

JOSE: But why should they take me? I am too young. I am not good enough.

MANUEL: You're a Valdez. (*Turn.*)

JOSE: They should have chosen some one else, some one who has done good deeds, taken corn to the poor, or done other charitable acts—I am not good enough.

MANUEL: What is this silly talk—good enough? You are old enough to know better than that. El Cristo is not chosen for "good enough." Your father told the Council what to do and that was the end of it.

JOSE (*rises and crosses to* MANUEL): Oh, no! You don't mean that my father proposed me?

MANUEL: Well, and why not?

JOSE: But you've always said—I thought——

MANUEL: You thought what the Council told you. Well, my boy, now that you are to be El Cristo, you must grow up. Of course the people believe that El Cristo is chosen of God. That is a good thing. They are more likely to do what they are told. And if El Cristo is every year from the Valdez family, that does not hurt the Valdez, perhaps!

JOSE: Then why did they not choose my cousin, Ricardo? He is older than I. Every one thought it would be he.

MANUEL (*rises*): What are you saying, that you wish Ricardo had been chosen? Go to your prayers, you are full of foolishness.

(MANUEL *crosses up stage to door and stands looking out of peek hole.* JOSE *returns slowly to altar and begins to pray.*)

JOSE:

Lamb of God, who takest away the sins of the world, spare us, O Lord,

Lamb of God, who takest away the sins of the world, graciously hear us, O Lord,

Lamb of God, who takest away the sins of the world, have mercy on us——(*He breaks off abruptly, rises, and goes center.*) Manuel!

MANUEL: Yes, what is it? (*At door.*)

JOSE: Does the Virgin hear our prayers, do you think? (*Center.*)

MANUEL (*turns to* JOSE): Jesu Cristo! First it is "not good enough" and now this blasphemy. You should go to the padre and ask him in confession. He would tell you soon enough. Por Dios! You better get such notions out of your head, or you'll babble them on the cross. (*Crosses to bench right of table left.*)

JOSE: How does it feel on the cross? (*Feels of arms.*)

MANUEL: How does it feel, eh? It's bad enough. But you will soon faint. Do not try to hold yourself up, or you will break your wrists when they let the cross down. Limp, that's it, like a cat. (*Sits upper end of bench right of table left.*)

JOSE: The arms—does it hurt the arms?

MANUEL: Yes, at the shoulders, like they would pull off. And the cords will cut you, of course. But it will soon heal.

JOSE: Simon was very sick for a long time afterwards.

MANUEL: Um—yes, he had a fever in the blood. But that need not happen to you. A week—two weeks at the most——

JOSE: And the feet, do the feet hurt, too?

MANUEL: You will not feel it, I tell you. Go to your prayers; this talk is not good for you.

JOSE: I have prayed all the afternoon. (*Crosses to door and opens it.*) It is dusk—will they come soon? (*He strays back toward the crosses in the corner.*) Will they use this cross? (*Runs hands along cross.*) It is rough, it will chafe my shoulders. (*Lifts cross.*) Dios, it is heavy!

MANUEL: Why do you ask all these questions? You are no novice. You have seen the crucifixion before.

JOSE: I have never been El Cristo before. (*Up stage right at cross.*)

MANUEL: Oh, you're afraid, perhaps.

JOSE: Afraid? No, no, I do not think I am afraid. (*In front of altar.*) Simon is bigger than I and stronger. Would that make him suffer more, his being so strong? I remember he struggled on the cross.

MANUEL (*rises*): Hush, hush, be silent! Put your thoughts on God. Do you imagine that our Blessed Lord talked like this to His friends? (*Crosses up to door.*)

JOSE (*looking at crucifix*): He was the Son of God.

MANUEL: Yes, but I suppose He didn't suffer any the less for that. This is a holy office, and you must perform it with courage.

JOSE (*inspired. Crosses to left*): Yes, I must have courage. It will be different from the whips. (*Crosses to whips on table left. Lifts one up.*) I always dreaded Easter before because of the whips. But to be El Cristo and suffer like the Blessed Savior Himself! (*Crosses to bench left of table left.*) Perhaps I shall even hear God speaking to me out of His Heaven!

MANUEL: Very likely! (*Comes down to upper end of table.*)

JOSE (*puts whip back*): Tell me, Manuel, did you hear Him when you were El Cristo? My father has often told me of that time. (*Sits.*) What did you think about? I shall look down at all the people and have the very thoughts of Our Lord, perhaps. (*Pause.*) Does Rosalia know that I am to be El Cristo?

MANUEL: Everybody knows by this time. Even now they are congregating at the door.

JOSE: She will come and stand at the foot of the cross, like Mary. And my mother with her.

MANUEL: Yes, yes, of course.

JOSE: She will be proud, perhaps. Ricardo told her *he* would be

chosen. She will not call me little chicken any longer, even to joke me. I wish I could see Rosalia.

MANUEL (*down center*): She may not come in here. Your mother, perhaps.

JOSE: Yes, my mother. She must come in to bless me. She will be happy, that I am El Cristo, that I am going to be crucified. (*Hysterically.*) I am happy, happy! (*Below table.*)

MANUEL: Hush, it is almost time. We must make the ordination. Come.

(*He leads* JOSE *to the altar.* JOSE *slips off the jacket of his white suit.* JOSE *kneels and* MANUEL *takes book from altar and stands directly back of* JOSE, *facing altar.*)

MANUEL: In the Name of the Father, Son and the Holy Ghost, Amen.

JOSE: Amen!

MANUEL: I commend your body and spirit to God who has taken away all sinful lusts and appetites, leaving your body free to become the counterpart of His Glorious Son. You are to suffer on the cross, expiating the sins of us all, bearing redemption in your own flesh. God have mercy on us. Christ have mercy on us. Mary lovingly watch over us. Father protect our souls.

JOSE: Amen! Amen!

MANUEL: I pronounce you counterpart by Divine Grace of our Blessed Lord, able to endure His sufferings in your own flesh and to receive consolation for your sins and the sins of many. Amen!

JOSE (*hysterically*): Amen! Amen! Counterpart of our Blessed Lord! Now I am to suffer like Him! (*Turns to* MANUEL.) Manuel, why did you not tell me it would be like this? I am not afraid any longer. God is within me!

MANUEL: Pray! Pray! Keep yourself for God.

JOSE (*reciting the Credo in a high, excited voice*): In the Name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, Amen! (MANUEL *goes to*

door.) I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of Heaven and Earth, and of all things visible and invisible. And in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, Light of Light, true God of true God, begotten, not made, who for us and for our salvation came down from Heaven and was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary, and was made man. Was crucified for us, suffered under Pontius Pilate, and was buried, and the third day he rose again and ascended into Heaven——

(*During this prayer, the father and mother of* JOSE *have come into the room. Father goes forward and adores the altar, then passes to the left and confers with* MANUEL *in whispers, glancing at* JOSE. *His mother remains near the door, weeping and gazing at her son. His voice has died to a murmur. She goes to him.*)

MOTHER: Jose! Jose, my little one.

JOSE (*turning, on his knees*): Madre mia! (*They embrace.*) Are you glad? Are you happy? I am El Cristo. (*They sway back and forth, both on their knees and in close embrace.*)

MOTHER: Pobrecito, child of my heart. I bless you. See, I pray for you. (*Crosses herself.*) Five sons, and every son El Cristo. I have been favored of God.

JOSE (*takes her face in his hands*): I am holy from your holiness. You are like our Blessed Lady.

FATHER: Jose! Jose!

JOSE: Sí, Señor.

(JOSE *rises and goes to his father. His mother remains praying. His father receives him with an embrace and stands with his arms around his shoulders.*)

FATHER: Well, Jose, you are to be El Cristo. It is a great dispensation.

JOSE: I am unworthy, Señor.

(MANUEL *sits on bench, left of table left.*)

FATHER: As to that the Council was judge, guided by prayers to God. But I did not wish to speak of that. You have been in preparation and prayer all the day. Is your soul at peace with God? Are you ready to submit your body?

JOSE (*crossing himself*): In the name of Christ, Amen.

FATHER: You are a very pious boy. But you are sensible besides. You know that you are not to suffer this pain for nothing. There are rewards for El Cristo, eh? (*Turns to* MANUEL.)

JOSE: It is the will of God.

FATHER: Well, yes, but it was the Council elected you. You must know—(*turns to* JOSE)—Jose, that El Cristo is powerful among our people. When you are well again, you will find that you are not Jose Valdez any longer, but the chosen of God. (*Sits on bench right of table left.*) Do you understand this?

JOSE: Sí, Señor.

FATHER: It is the Council that has made you so. Our society has worldly as well as religious duties. You know that? We have to keep our people in power here, or Los Penitentes would be driven from the country. In November are the elections. Your father will try for sheriff. The Council will need you. There is much you can do for us.

JOSE: I, Señor?

FATHER (*significantly*): Not you, Jose, but El Cristo.

JOSE (*shocked*): El Cristo!

FATHER: Yes, your position as El Cristo will give you great influence. You will help with the election, then you can be what you wish, deputy, clerk, anything. It's a fine start for you.

JOSE: Deputy! Clerk! I am to be crucified so that I may become a clerk! Madre de Dios!

FATHER (*rises*): Come, that's not the way to look at it. Every fox for his own hole. Nobody will defend Los Penitentes if Los Penitentes do not look out for themselves.

JOSE: But El Cristo is a holy office.

FATHER: Well, even a holy office has its uses.

JOSE (*crosses two steps to* MANUEL, *who is sitting on bench left of table left*): Am I to be crucified for this? Manuel, tell me it is not so! Did you not just say that I was the counterpart of Our Lord? Did you not say it was for my sins and the sins of many? I was to be El Cristo. I do not understand these elections.

FATHER: Of course you are El Cristo. I was only trying to show you what duties belong to your office.

JOSE: It is true, then, it is true. It is only to win the people and elect a Valdez for sheriff. Madre de Dios, that is it! I am not El Cristo at all. (*Falls on his knees.*)

MOTHER (*rising and crossing to him*): Jose!

MANUEL (*to* VALDEZ. *Rises*): Fool! I told you not to talk to him. It would have been easy enough afterwards.

FATHER: Let him alone. Dios! He's a Valdez, isn't he? Let him alone.

JOSE (*his head buried in his hands*): Was crucified, dead and buried!

MANUEL: He's mad!

MOTHER: Chiquillo mio. He's so young. What have you done to him, my baby?

FATHER: Pues bien, my child. I did not mean to frighten you. It shall be as you say. Come, it is almost time.

JOSE: Able to endure His sufferings in my own flesh and receive——

FATHER (*pulling him up*): Come, the people are waiting. The people are waiting, Jose.

JOSE: I will not, I will not. Mary, Mother of Heaven. (*He sinks*

down on bench, right of table left, and covers his face.)

MOTHER (*crosses to him, standing between bench and table*): Do not be stubborn. You can't mean you won't go. The people are all waiting for you, and you are to be El Cristo.

JOSE (*turning toward her and looking up into her face*): I am not El Cristo. It is a lie. I never was El Cristo.

(*Confusion is heard outside, the door bursts open, and* ROSALIA *rushes into the room. She runs to* JOSE *and flings herself at his feet, hugging his knees.*)

ROSALIA: Jose! They would not let me come. Jose, give me your hands, let me kiss them. Oh, you are to suffer, my brave one.

FATHER: How did she come in? Take her out, Manuel.

ROSALIA: Let me kiss your poor hands, beloved. You will suffer. I cannot bear it.

MANUEL: This is sacrilege.

FATHER: Rosalia, here, you must go.

MOTHER: Let her stay. Come, Jose, here is Rosalia to see you go out. They will give you the cross. Are you ready?

JOSE (*rising, crosses center to* VALDEZ): No! No! Do you think I will do it for those things? I am not El Cristo, that was a lie. It is wicked to pretend, a sin.

ROSALIA (*sits on bench*): What are you saying? They told me you were El Cristo.

FATHER: My son, are you insane? Of course you will go. A Valdez welcomes the cross.

JOSE: Are you to try for sheriff or not?

FATHER: Yes, you know that I am.

JOSE: And I am to help you, as El Cristo?

FATHER: I hope a son would help his father.

MANUEL (*from position left of table left*): This is baby talk. He is afraid, that's all the matter with him. All the afternoon he was

asking me, the hands, the feet, where does it hurt. He could not pray for thinking of it. (*Crosses up to door.*)

FATHER (*proudly—at altar*): A Valdez is never afraid.

MOTHER: Four of my sons have been El Cristo, and their father before them. Jose, little one, what is this foolishness?

JOSE: Madre mia, Rosalia, how can I tell you? Rosalia?

ROSALIA (*still sitting on bench*): Oh, Ricardo has told me enough. So you are a coward, after all.

JOSE (*passionately*): Yes, I am afraid of the cross. You, Manuel, were you not afraid? But I was consecrated, I was willing, I would have suffered like the Savior.

FATHER: Well, come, then. (*General movement.*)

JOSE: No! No! I will not go. It is not for Christ any longer. Oh, Rosalia, don't you see?

ROSALIA (*rises, crosses center, to* JOSE): You are a coward, a coward!

FATHER (*crosses up center.* JOSE *sits on bench right of table left*): He won't go. He's a fool. What shall we do, Manuel?

MANUEL: Ricardo was second choice, but we'll have to make him sheriff.

FATHER: Go for him. What does it matter? He will be better than nobody. (*Takes book from the altar, kneels and says a brief prayer at altar.* MANUEL *goes out.*)

MOTHER: Jose, Jose! Say you will go. It is not too late. I will care for you. You will not suffer much. Five sons, and you the last. For your father's sake.

JOSE (*hurt*): For my Father's sake.

(*Enter* MANUEL *with* RICARDO.)

MANUEL: Here is Ricardo.

FATHER: Ricardo, your cousin, Jose, will not go—you must be El Cristo.

RICARDO (*standing in door*): El Cristo? El Cristo? Why, I thought Jose—I see, he has refused you. The blood of the Valdez grows cold.

FATHER: Stop, Ricardo. Is it not enough that I must say that you are to be El Cristo?

RICARDO: It is the will of God, I suppose. The will of God that El Cristo be a man of firm flesh and that the next sheriff be Ricardo. Very well, then I accept. If it pleases Valdez, it pleases me. (*Bows very low, then crosses down to* JOSE.) So, my pretty cousin, you lost your courage at the last. Ah, well, it takes a man for this business.

ROSALIA (*running to* RICARDO): Oh, Ricardo, how proud I am of you.

RICARDO: Rosalia, my beautiful one. (*They kiss passionately.*)

JOSE (*pleadingly*): Rosalia——

ROSALIA (*turning to* JOSE): You chicken heart! (*Turning to* RICARDO.) Ricardo, my brave one—my love. (*They kiss.*)

FATHER: Ricardo, kneel over here. Manuel, take the women away. (VALDEZ *takes book and thumbs pages until* MANUEL *returns.*) Get the crosses ready. (*During this time,* RICARDO *has slipped off his jacket and is at the altar praying in an undertone. With the exit of the women the off stage noise begins, chanting and wailing softly.* MANUEL *goes out with the two women. Returns, and shifts the crosses about while father reads the words of the ordination in loud, harsh tones.*) In the Name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, Amen! I commend your body and spirit to God, who has taken away all sinful lusts and appetites, leaving your body free to become the counterpart of His Glorious Son. You are to suffer on the cross, expiating the sins of us all, bearing redemption in your own flesh. God have mercy on us. Christ have mercy on us. Mary protect our souls. (JOSE *gives an inarticulate sob.* FATHER *continues.*) I pronounce you counterpart by Divine Grace of our Blessed Lord,

able to endure His sufferings in your own flesh and to receive consolation for your sins and the sins of many. Amen!

RICARDO (*rising and dusting his knees*): Amen! And the Council will stand for me for sheriff? You'll have to give me your promise.

FATHER: Oh, we know your price, Ricardo. Ready, Manuel? Bring more whips. Last night there were not enough.

RICARDO (*as he passes* JOSE, *kicks his bare feet*): You'll be sorry when you see the pretty girls making confession to me. You must be a fool as well as a coward to throw away such a chance.

MANUEL: Hush, fool! Will you make this a huzzy house? (MANUEL *takes lantern from the table, places it down stage right center to serve as excuse for spotlight later. He then takes the little end of the cross and turns it around, with* RICARDO *at the large end as a pivot. He then takes the book from the altar; opening it, he goes to door and chants.*) Oh, God, The Maker of Heaven and Earth, have mercy upon us miserable sinners. (*The men off stage take up the chant and the women continue their wailing. They go out.*)

(JOSE *turns and watches them go. When the door is closed, he stumbles to the altar and throws himself before it. For a second he stands with his arms outstretched, the shadow thrown by the lantern forms a perfect cross on the up stage wall.*)

JOSE (*sobbing*): Jesu Cristo! Oh, Jesu Cristo!

CURTAIN

DUST OF THE ROAD *

BY

KENNETH SAWYER GOODMAN

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CHARACTERS

Peter Steele
Prudence Steele
An Old Man
The Tramp

DUST OF THE ROAD

The time is about one o'clock of a Christmas morning in the early seventies. The place is the living room of a comfortable and fairly prosperous Middle Western farmer. At the right as you face the stage is a fireplace with a glowing fire in it. Beside the fire is a large armchair in which PRUDENCE *is sitting. At her elbow is a small table with a lighted lamp, having a shade of green tin. At the left is a door going into other parts of the house; at the back center a door going outside. There is a larger table at left center near the front of the stage. There is also a lighted lamp on this table, but the back of the stage is in semi-darkness. Near the outside door is a window, the curtains of which are drawn. As the curtain rises, the* OLD MAN *has just shut and bolted the outside door as if shutting some one out. He is partly dressed and carries a lighted candle in his hand.*

PRUDENCE: Well, what did he say?

OLD MAN: Nothing. He's gone, if that's any comfort to you.

PRUDENCE: It is a comfort to me. I don't like folks coming to the door at this time of night.

OLD MAN: You might have stirred yourself to take a look at him. He was that cold I could hear his teeth chatter.

PRUDENCE: What was he like?

OLD MAN: Youngish, I'd say, with thin cheeks and a yellow beard. But I never seen such old looking eyes as he had.

PRUDENCE: Go to bed, Uncle.

OLD MAN: Both his hands were bandaged. I could see the blood on 'em.

PRUDENCE: Well, what of it? We can't be feeding every beggar that comes to the house.

OLD MAN (*at the window*): He ain't turned the willows at the bend of the road. I could holler to him yet.

PRUDENCE: Go back to bed, I tell you, and let me read my Bible till Peter comes in.

OLD MAN (*going toward the inside door*): You've set me thinking, Prudence Steele. You've set me thinking again.

PRUDENCE: Hush your mouth, and go to bed.

OLD MAN: Aye, aye, that's it! "To them that hath shall be given, and from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath." If folks only knows enough to keep their mouths shut.

PRUDENCE: Now, you're blaspheming again.

OLD MAN: Maybe I am. But if I was to open my mouth now and tell what I can remember clear as day, wouldn't I be serving the Lord? Answer me that.

PRUDENCE: Nobody'd believe you.

OLD MAN: I ain't asking 'em to. If you and Peter can disremember what happened in this room, it ain't for me to turn against my own kin.

PRUDENCE: Nothing happened in this room.

OLD MAN: Maybe I never seen thirty one-hundred dollar bills counted out on this table.

PRUDENCE: Go to bed.

OLD MAN: I'm going—I'm going, but it would do me good to see them that's proud pulled down and her that wouldn't spare a crust for a lame beggar on Christmas Eve, losing a piece of money like that as a judgment. It would be as fine a judgment as ever I see in that there book of yours.

(*The* OLD MAN *goes out chuckling.* PRUDENCE *follows him to the door, closes it, listens a moment, then blows out the lamp on the larger table and returns to*

the chair by the fire. She turns the pages of the book and then lays it face down on her knee and puts her hand over her eyes. The whole stage is now nearly dark, the only light coming from the lamp on the small table and from the fire in the grate. The TRAMP *opens the outside door and steps into the room.* PRUDENCE *stirs a little and the book drops from her lap, rousing her. She sits up and listens. The* TRAMP *closes the door and shoots the bolt.*)

PRUDENCE: You're powerful late getting in.

TRAMP: Aye, maybe I am. (*He rattles the door to see if it is fast.*)

PRUDENCE: Hush your noise with the bolt, can't you! You'll be having Uncle down here again.

TRAMP: I'll take my chance of that!

PRUDENCE: What's the matter with your voice?

TRAMP: It's the river fog sticking in my throat.

PRUDENCE (*rising*): Come here and let me look at you. I never heard you speak with that voice before.

TRAMP (*stepping into the light*): I dare say you never did!

PRUDENCE: God save us! I thought you were my husband!

TRAMP: I gathered as much from your friendly greeting. (*He comes a step nearer.*)

PRUDENCE: Stand off or I'll scream! What do you want? Who are you?

TRAMP: What's the need of your knowing?

PRUDENCE: Tell me what you want and get out of my house. You needn't grin at me. I'm not afraid of you!

TRAMP: You're a bold woman!

PRUDENCE: I have cause to be, with a husband leaving me lonesome half the nights of the year, and beggars prowling the dark like rats.

TRAMP: You've a brave tongue in your head, and a kind voice, like a chilly wind on a tin church steeple. You'll ask me to sit by your fire next and offer me a sup of something hot.

PRUDENCE: I'll point you the door you came in by, and set the dog to your coat-tails.

TRAMP: Fine hospitality for the beginning of Christmas Day.

PRUDENCE: Who are you?

TRAMP: Dust of the road, my dear, like any other man. Dust with a spark of fire in it.

PRUDENCE: You're a tramp, by the looks of you—or worse.

TRAMP: A tramp is it? That's what you'd call a gay fellow tramping the hills for the clean joy of sun and air; keen snow in winter and the voice of the birds in the warm season. It's what you'd call the lifeless wretches, skulking from doorstep to doorstep for the leavings of other folk's tables. I'm neither the one sort nor the other, but the name fits me well enough.

PRUDENCE: Whatever you call yourself, you've got no business in a decent person's house at the middle of the night.

TRAMP (*taking a pipe from his pocket and filling it*): Is your husband like to be home soon?

PRUDENCE: You'll hear him at the door any minute now. If you're thinking of robbery you'd better be quick about it. There's little enough to take.

TRAMP (*lighting his pipe and seating himself on the edge of the large table*): You can keep your hand off that trinket at your neck and make your mind easy about the spoons. I'm a disreputable character, a prowler in the night, a betrayer of friendship: I've none of what you'd call common decency; I'd as leave eat your bread and kiss your hand and do you a dirty turn afterward as not, but—well—I've a different whim. I'm not here to make you trouble.

PRUDENCE: Fine ideas you've got! What'll my husband say when he smells the smoke of your pipe?

TRAMP: I'm waiting to see him myself when he comes in.

PRUDENCE: Like as not he'll break your head for your pains.

TRAMP: Aye, like as not.

PRUDENCE: You've got gall to be sitting there swinging your feet.

TRAMP: I'm thinking what I'll say to you in the meantime.

PRUDENCE: You won't be doing much thinking when he's pounded you till the teeth ache in your jaws.

TRAMP (*in a cold sharp voice and speaking very slowly*): Why did you send that other beggar away just now, Prudence Steele?

PRUDENCE: So you know my name, do you?

TRAMP: Yes! It's a cruel sounding name, Prudence Steele, and you've a cruel way of speaking and of looking at a poor man, my dear!

PRUDENCE: You're a fine hand at a compliment, Mister Tramp.

TRAMP: Why did you send him away?

PRUDENCE: Send who away?

TRAMP: The lame man with the bandages on his hands and feet.

PRUDENCE: What's that to you?

TRAMP: I was standing in the road. I saw him knock at your door. I saw it open a little. I saw it close again. I saw him go away —just as I've seen him go from thousands of other doors.

PRUDENCE: He must be a friend of yours.

TRAMP: No. He was one once. Now he's a creditor.

PRUDENCE: By the looks of it, he'll have a hard time getting his money.

TRAMP: Money's easy to find—sometimes too easy. Now if you'd care to feel in my pockets—(*he jingles coins in his pockets.*)

PRUDENCE: Well, pay him then, and keep him from pestering other folks.

TRAMP: One isn't always minded to pay one's debts. And some-

times it's not so easy as you'd think. Only one day of the year I walk the same road with him. I follow him with the money in my hand. I met him at your gate just now and offered it. He turned aside his face. Would you like to see the coins? (*Holding out his hand with coins.*) You must. Thirty pieces of silver coined in the Roman mint at Jerusalem.

(*Faint blue light now illumines the face of the* TRAMP *and becomes brighter as the scene goes on.*)

PRUDENCE (*fascinated, looking at the money*): You frighten me. What are those stains?

TRAMP: Blood, my dear! It's blood money.

PRUDENCE: Whose blood?

TRAMP: The man's who knocked at your door.

PRUDENCE: What did he want?

TRAMP: He came to give—not to ask.

PRUDENCE: What beggar would be going about the country giving something away?

TRAMP: Yes, Prudence Steele, what beggar would be doing that? It's a riddle for you to read.

PRUDENCE: And I suppose, now, you've got something to give me!

TRAMP: Yes, something you won't be likely to take.

PRUDENCE: Huh! Advice, I suppose. That's the cheapest thing I know.

TRAMP: Sit down. (PRUDENCE *sits down.*) Where the man with the wounded hands knocks once, he knocks again. Wherever he's turned away, I find the door unlatched. But open the door to him, and I stand in the road outside—I'm glad! Oh, I'm a person of strange contradictions—like any other man. You don't understand me.

PRUDENCE: No.

TRAMP: No matter! When he knocks again, let him come in.

PRUDENCE: What do you mean?

TRAMP: Let him come in, I tell you, and save the joy of life in your heart.

(*There is a stamping outside and the door is shaken.*)

PETER (*outside*): Hi! Open the door! Prudence, I say! Wake up and open the door!

PRUDENCE (*starting and passing her hands across her eyes*): It's Peter. It's my husband.

TRAMP: Open the door for him!

(PRUDENCE *runs to the door and opens it.* PETER *enters and she clings to him, half hysterical. The* TRAMP *remains seated on the larger table, but the light fades from his face.*)

PRUDENCE: Peter—oh, Peter, Peter!

PETER: What's biting you? Let go my arm, woman! Are you trying to claw the coat off me?

PRUDENCE: Send him away! Send him away! Send him away!

PETER: Take your hands off me.

PRUDENCE: Send him away!

PETER: Send who away?

PRUDENCE: That man! That man over there! I'm afraid of him!

PETER: What man?

PRUDENCE: He came in without knocking. I thought it was you! He's terrible—he's crazy! Look at his eyes! Send him away!

PETER: Go on! Don't be a fool. There's nobody here!

PRUDENCE: Over there! He was standing by the table. The table over there. . . . He's gone!

(*They both move across the room, but the* TRAMP *has disappeared in the darkness.*)

PETER: You've been asleep! You've had a nightmare. You've been

worrying again. You'd no call to sit up waiting for me. There's been nobody here.

PRUDENCE: I could have taken my solemn oath! . . .

PETER (*roughly*): You'll take no oaths except them I tell you to. Go to bed!

PRUDENCE: Where've you been?

PETER: Up to the church. I stayed to a vestry meeting. I walked home slow.

PRUDENCE: You've decided what we're going to do?

PETER: Go to bed and let me think. I'll tell you in the morning.

(PRUDENCE *moves toward the inside door.* PETER *calls her back.*)

PETER: Look here! You'll keep your mouth shut? You'll stick to that?

PRUDENCE: Yes. (*She makes a move as if she were coming back to say something.*)

PETER: Get out of here and let me alone.

(*He sits down in the chair by the fire and puts his face in his hands.* PRUDENCE *goes out. The* TRAMP *reappears.*)

TRAMP: Well, Peter Steele, is it easy to think of perjury and theft on Christmas morning?

PETER: God! Who's talking to me!

TRAMP: A greater rogue than yourself.

PETER (*rising*): I see you now, confound you! Where were you hiding when I came in?

TRAMP: No matter!

PETER: So, my wife wasn't dreaming, eh!

TRAMP: No more than you are.

PETER: You frightened her, eh! I'll make short work of you. (*He begins rolling up his sleeves.*)

TRAMP: I only gave her a little advice.

PETER: I'll give you something else! (*He moves toward the* TRAMP.)

TRAMP (*coolly*): Sit down!

PETER: Get out of here, with your advice! Get out, I tell you, before I kick you out.

TRAMP (*more harshly but without moving*): Sit down.

PETER: You can't frighten me with your talk. I'm an honest man, I tell you.

TRAMP: So was I once.

PETER: What have you got to do with me, damn you?

TRAMP: "For there is nothing covered that shall not be revealed, neither hid that shall not be known."

PETER (*with a sigh of relief*): Oh, I see now. You're only a travelling preacher.

TRAMP: No, but I've travelled much and worn the cloth in my time.

PETER: I'm dashed if I see what you're driving at!

TRAMP: You will presently.

PETER: I won't listen to you.

TRAMP: You know what's coming.

PETER: How should I know what's coming? I'll—I'll——

TRAMP: You'll listen, Peter Steele, because I'm going to tell you something about yourself and you'll know it for the truth.

PETER: If—if some one sent you here to pump me, you'd better be off, or I'll have the law on you both.

TRAMP: You had a friend, Peter Steele, and you loved him. He'd often left his affairs in your hands. You'd served him honestly and he trusted you.

PETER: And why wouldn't anybody trust me? I've been an honest man, I tell you.

TRAMP: He came to you in this room. It was the spring the war began. He had enlisted a company. Before he left you he brought you money, money to keep for his boy.

PETER: It's a lie! I tell you, it's a damned lie! What right's the boy got to think his father gave me money to keep for him? He ain't got a receipt, has he? It ain't shown in the accounts, is it?

TRAMP: No, Peter Steele, the boy can't show a receipt and the entry's not to be found in the accounts.

PETER: By what token do you think a man would be fool enough to leave money lying around loose like that?

TRAMP: By the token that he trusted you.

PETER: I never had it! I tell you I never had it! What do you know about it?

TRAMP: The drums were beating in the road. Your friend was in his captain's uniform. His sword lay on the table by the door; his cloak over the back of that chair. You sat here. He stood across the table from you. Your wife sat where you're sitting now; her uncle over there by the window.

PETER: Who told you all that? What tricks are you trying to play on me?

TRAMP: Your friend laid the money on this table; thirty one-hundred dollar bills. He said to you, "Peter, I want to leave this money with you. In case I don't come back, I'd rather my boy didn't count on anything at all when he makes his start. I've fixed things safe for him till he can earn his keep. This is something extra, a nest egg for him, when he's twenty-one." Then he shook you by the hand. As he went down the path, the drums stopped beating, and when the room was still again you heard the voice of the money!

PETER: God, how did you know that?

TRAMP: Oh, you meant to keep faith, Peter Steele, but you never entered the three thousand dollars in your accounts. Well, he never came back. You read his name in the lists. It set you thinking about the boy and his money. Years went by. The boy began to work and earn his keep. You watched him grow up and wondered if he guessed. Last week, you remembered that your debt fell due on the day after Christmas. Then you sat down to figure interest. You'd used the money well and you tried a just rate. The total startled you. Then you tried three per cent; still too much! Then you sat quiet and the money whispered to you, "Why give me up at all? No one can prove you ever had me."

PETER: And they can't prove it! My wife and her uncle can swear they never saw it paid.

TRAMP: Certainly.

PETER: The boy can't show a receipt.

TRAMP: None.

PETER: No. I don't know who told you all this, but if you're trying to blackmail me, there's the door, and be damned!

TRAMP: I'll not trouble you again, whatever decision you come to.

PETER: Then, what in hell did you come here for? Answer me that!

TRAMP: To advise you to give the boy his money of your own free will.

PETER: Ha! Ha! Anything else?

TRAMP: No.

PETER: Who in the devil are you, stranger?

TRAMP: Come closer!

PETER: I can see you well enough from here.

TRAMP: Come here and look at me. Have you ever seen me before?

PETER: No, thank Heaven! I never have.

TRAMP: Look in my eyes.

(PETER *moves toward him as if dazed.*)

PETER: They're like the eyes of a cat! There's fire in 'em!

TRAMP: Flame from a sunset under Calvary. Look at my throat!

PETER (*shrinking away*): I've seen marks like that on a man. . . .

TRAMP: I hanged myself to a dead tree on a stony hillside. Listen!

(*He jingles the money in his pocket.*)

PETER: It's the sound of money!

TRAMP: Thirty pieces of silver, coined in the Roman mint at Jerusalem; the price of my soul, that's walked the evil edge of the world, for nineteen centuries.

PETER: In God's name, tell me who you are!

TRAMP: The one being that knows best the priceless value of the thing you're so ready to sell—Judas of Kerioth.

(*He advances toward* PETER, *who sinks into the chair by the fire, cowering away from him.*)

PETER: Let me alone, I say! Let me alone!

TRAMP: You'd been an honest man, Peter Steele, and the sun had warmed you and the birds piped to you when you ploughed the fields. You'd looked against the faces of red hills when dawn was new, and strained your eyes across blue valleys at the close of day. And men spoke you fair in the roads and children turned to you as you passed, till a little while ago. What came over you that you'd put the joy of living in pawn for thirty pieces of money?

PETER: Let me be! I've become a hard man; and money's a big thing in the world. What's the piping of birds to me? Leave me alone and let me sell my soul if I like! It's mine to sell!

TRAMP: Aye! It's yours to sell. To sell over and over, if you like. There's money to be got for it, more than the first price you take, and pride, and ease of body, and fear of men! But it isn't only your soul you sell, Peter Steele, and nothing you get will

compare with that which goes out of you when the first payment clinks in your hand.

PETER: Let me be! Let me be!

TRAMP: You'll miss the joy of small things crying in the grass, and the pleasant sadness that comes of watching the fall of yellow leaves. You'll take no comfort in the sound of a woman's singing, or the laughing of a child, or the crackling of a fire in the grate.

PETER: I was never a hand at noticing such things.

TRAMP: No, but an honest man shares all the common gifts of God. He feels and is grateful without knowing how or why. He seldom knows the joy of it all, till he's lost the power of feeling.

PETER: Let me be.

TRAMP: You'll walk the sunshiny roads and have only the dust of them in your throat. You'll see little lakes lying in the bosom of the hills, like purple wine in cups of green jade, and have only the pain of daylight in your eyes. You'll lie down to sleep with the crystal stars blinking at you, and have only the empty blackness of night in your heart. I know how it will be with you, Peter Steele.

PETER: What do you want me to do?

TRAMP: Give up the money of your own free will.

PETER: What interest have you got in seeing me go straight? Whose work are you doing?

TRAMP (*slowly*): It's one thing to die in a splendid agony and save the world. It's another to drag the weight of a name like mine from century to century; to live on and on, and suffer every pain of death; to save a man here and a man there only to balance my own long account—to die—to be forgotten.

PETER: To balance your long account?

TRAMP: Turn you from the thing you're about to do, and I toss a grain of dust into the scales. There's a heavy weight to be bal-

anced, Peter Steele, and it's only one day of the year I'm free to search.

PETER: Let me be.

TRAMP: Would you rob me, too?

PETER (*putting his hands to his head*): Let me think, I tell you! Let me think!

(*The inside door opens, and* PRUDENCE *enters dressed in a wrapper and carrying a small lamp. As the light illuminates that side of the room, the glow fades on the* TRAMP'S *face and he disappears.* PETER *sits with his head in his hands, just as* PRUDENCE *left him.*)

PRUDENCE: Peter, Peter, are you asleep?

PETER (*starting*): Eh? No.

PRUDENCE: Why haven't you come to bed? It's near daylight.

PETER: I've been thinking, Prudence—I've been thinking.

PRUDENCE: About—about?

PETER: Say it. I've been thinking of perjury and theft on Christmas morning. I've been thinking of selling my soul for thirty pieces of money. (*He rises.*) But, thank God, I haven't sold it yet.

PRUDENCE (*going to him*): Oh, Peter! Peter!

PETER: The boy will get his money on the nail. I'm an honest man, Prudence, I'm an honest man, I tell you!

PRUDENCE: Oh, Peter, I'm glad, I'm glad!

PETER: Every penny he'll get and interest. Fair interest!

PRUDENCE: It's a great deal of money, but I'm glad!

PETER: Little enough to give for keeping the joy of living in your heart on Christmas Day.

PRUDENCE: I want to tell you something. I couldn't sleep either. Oh, Peter, I couldn't sleep.

PETER: You've been thinking of it, too.

PRUDENCE: Not about the money. There was a lame man here just before you came in. I sent him away. It worries me, Peter. I'm sorry I didn't let him in. Uncle saw him. He'd been hurt. His feet and hands were bandaged. I thought—I thought perhaps . . . I feel as if he'd stopped somewhere near the house.

PETER: Which way did he go?

PRUDENCE: Toward the willows at the bend of the road.

PETER (*reaching for his hat and coat*): Like as not he'd try to shelter himself there. (*He moves toward the outside door.*)

PRUDENCE: Where are you going?

PETER: To find him and fetch him back. We can't let him freeze. (*They go together to the outside door and open it. It is morning outside.*)

PETER: It's morning already.

PRUDENCE: Did you ever see such a dawn on the snow?

PETER: Never in my life. (*He kisses her and goes out.*)

PRUDENCE (*calling after him*): I'll have the coffee on the stove.

CURTAIN

THE COLOR LINE*

BY

IRENE TAYLOR MacNAIR

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CHARACTERS

HENRY LAWSON, *president of a Western college. He is a man of fifty with iron gray hair.*

FU CHUN, *a Chinese student. He is twenty-four years old, of medium height and slender, alert and graceful in his movements.*

BARBARA MCKEAN, *daughter of missionaries. She is an attractive girl and very vivacious. She is twenty-two years old and a junior in college.*

STANLEY PRESTON, *a senior. He is twenty-three years old and tall. He is dressed in an R. O. T. C. uniform.*

WANDA WILLIAMS, *a good-hearted college flapper. She is dressed in the latest sports clothes.*

MISS KING, *the president's secretary.*

THE COLOR LINE

SCENE: *The outer office of the college president. There is a door on the right leading into the hall, and one on the left leading into the president's office. In the back of the room is a magazine stand, with chairs standing against the wall. On the right wall is a bookcase and on the left a filing case. To the left of the middle of the room is the secretary's desk with chairs on both sides. To the right is an arm chair.*

MISS KING *is seated at the desk reading over some letters she has just typed. The door to the right opens and* PRESIDENT LAWSON *enters.*

LAWSON: Good morning, Miss King. How's the day starting for you? Has my mail come yet?

MISS KING: No, Dr. Lawson, I'm afraid it's a bit late this morning. But here are your Memorial Fund letters all ready to sign.

LAWSON: Ah, Miss King, you are too efficient. I believe you know how I hate to sign letters.

MISS KING: Yet I saw you sign one once that brought us ten thousand dollars for the college.

LAWSON: That's right, you did; but, as I remember, the average shows sixty-three cents per signature.

MISS KING: You have the addresses for this list in your office, haven't you?

LAWSON: Yes, they are in my desk file. I'll sign these letters here while you get them.

(MISS KING *goes into the inner office.* DR. LAWSON *hangs up his hat, sits down at the desk and starts signing letters. The door to the right opens and* CHUN *enters.*)

LAWSON (*looking up from the desk*): Good morning, Chun. Come right in. You are bright and early this morning.

CHUN: Good morning, Dr. Lawson. You sent for me to see you to-day? (*Places his hat on the magazine table and walks over to the desk.*)

LAWSON: Yes, I wanted to see you about some business. Have a seat.

(CHUN *sits in the chair across the desk from the president.*)

CHUN: Very well, thank you.

LAWSON: You get good news from your family, I suppose.

CHUN: My family does not write to me.

LAWSON: Oh! I beg your pardon, I had forgotten. Your father disowned you, wasn't that it, for becoming a Christian?

CHUN: Yes, sir, that was many years ago.

LAWSON: Very remarkable. Wonderful courage it takes to become a Christian in the face of a thing like that. Barbara McKean told me all about it. Her father was the man responsible for your acceptance of the Christian faith, wasn't he?

CHUN: Yes, Dr. Lawson.

LAWSON (*seeing that* CHUN *is not enjoying the conversation*): Well, we'll get down to business. (*Calls into the other room.*) Miss King, please bring me Snyder's letter there on the desk, the one with the Chinese stamp. (*Turning to* CHUN.) Snyder and I were old classmates, and now he is president of Kowling College in Si Yun. (MISS KING *brings him the letter and goes out again.*) You're acquainted with it, aren't you?

CHUN: Yes, I know about it. It is a very fine school.

LAWSON: Snyder has done a fine piece of work there. He is writing now for a teacher from this country. Of course I thought of you immediately, for you graduate this June. I have looked up your records and find you stand very high. It's always been

your aim to return to your native country as a teacher, hasn't it?

CHUN: Yes, it has been my aim.

LAWSON: You have had a good Christian education, and with the extra training in this country you are as well fitted as any one I know to take this place.

CHUN: But doesn't your friend want an American?

LAWSON: He said nothing about that in this letter; but I know they plan to substitute Chinese teachers for the Americans as quickly as practicable. Soon even the president is to be a Chinese, doubtless chosen from among the teachers. It seems to me a wonderful opening for you as a Chinese Christian leader. (*At the words "Christian leader"* CHUN *frowns and looks down.*)

CHUN: Yes, it is an opening.

LAWSON (*puzzled by the fact that* CHUN *has not shown more enthusiasm*): I want to answer this letter as soon as possible, and shall I say that you would like to apply for the position? (*Hesitates a moment, but as* CHUN *says nothing adds*): Or do you want more time to think it over? This may be rushing you too much. Do you want to wait a couple of days or so?

CHUN: No, Dr. Lawson. You may write to Mr. Snyder that I have other plans. I go back to China, yes; I go to be a leader among my people, yes. But I go to lead the Chinese in a fight against Christianity. (*Stands as he speaks.*)

LAWSON (*starting to his feet*): What did you say?

CHUN (*with more self-assurance*): I go to lead my people in a fight against Christianity.

LAWSON: But, Chun, I don't understand.

CHUN: No, you are a white man; you can't understand.

LAWSON: But what has Christianity to do with color?

CHUN: It draws the color line.

LAWSON: That idea is being done away with. Why, world brotherhood is the keynote of Christianity to-day!

CHUN: That is what I was taught by the missionaries.

LAWSON: And don't you believe it?

CHUN: I did then, but now—now I have discovered it is all a farce.

LAWSON: Chun, this is serious. What has happened to you since you used to believe what the missionaries taught you?

CHUN: I have been in America.

LAWSON: What has America done to you? Sit down, Chun. (*Both sit down.*)

CHUN: She has made me an outcast. I thought I was getting away from that when I came here. When I became a Christian my family disowned me, but I was happy to belong to the big world family of Christians. When I came to America my heart was full of joy. What did I find? I was looked down on as an outsider. Back there I was disowned as a Chinese because I was a Christian. Here I am not taken in as a Christian because I am Chinese. I cannot stand it any longer. I will go back, renounce Christianity, and be a real Chinese again.

LAWSON: I am perfectly amazed to learn how you feel. I did not dream but that you were quite happy here with us. I hope you have not been badly treated here in the school?

CHUN (*shrugging his shoulders*): Oh, no; nothing more than being snubbed all the time.

LAWSON: Why didn't you tell me about this before? I would have spoken to the student body about it.

CHUN: And do college students have to be taught manners like six-year-olds?

LAWSON: How about social affairs?—I never thought to ask about such things before.

CHUN: The men don't want a "Chink" in any of their fraternities, and for class parties all the men must have "dates." At first I asked two or three girls but they refused me, and I heard one say behind my back that she was afraid I might, what do you

say—"fall for her." Why should I fall in love with an American girl when I am engaged to be married to the most beautiful and gracious girl in all China?

LAWSON: I remember you said once that you were engaged. The girl is Christian too, isn't she? What does she say about this new attitude of yours?

CHUN: She loves me, and when she hears how I have suffered she too will be ready to change her mind.

LAWSON: You have not told her yet?

CHUN: No, I always made her think that I was happy here. I knew these things would make her grieve. But when I go back I shall tell her.

LAWSON: But some of the students have been nice to you, surely. How about Barbara McKean? She knew you in China.

CHUN: Yes, Barbara McKean has been very nice, but she is always busy, for she is happy and gay and popular. And now she is engaged to Stanley Preston.

LAWSON: What's the matter with Stanley?

CHUN: Nothing. But all he thinks of is to be an officer in the R. O. T. C. Chinese students are outside his world.

LAWSON: Stanley *is* taking the R. O. T. C. a bit seriously this year. Nevertheless he is one of the finest men in the senior class. But what has all this to do with our religion?

CHUN: That is the trouble; it has nothing to do with religion. Your everyday life has no connection with it whatever. Many times while traveling around this country I have had much difficulty in finding a room for the night, because hotels would not let me in. Twice I have had to walk the streets all night because of my color. No, all this has nothing to do with religion.

LAWSON: See here, my dear fellow. We need more time to think this matter through.

CHUN: "Time to think it through!" To think! That is all I have

been doing for months and months. How I have struggled and fought!

LAWSON: Just what were you fighting for, Chun?

CHUN: For love, for world brotherhood, for Christ. I loved him once. I came to this country with my heart burning with desire to teach Christ to my people, to show them how to live together according to the golden rule. I saw then that you do not do that in your business, in your government. I saw the attitude you have toward foreigners. And I began to lose my faith. Last month I wrote a paper, an oration for the intercollegiate oratorical contest. (*Rising.*) To me it was my last effort to make my old beliefs live. I made in it my last appeal for the practice of Christ's teachings, for love and brotherhood, racial equalities, and equal opportunities for all. I put my whole heart into it, all my strength. (*He walks to the back of the room.*)

LAWSON (*in a low voice*): And what happened to the oration?

CHUN (*returning*): Professor Dickson returned it to me. He said it was a fine piece of literature, but he hoped I would understand that my subject was out of place, and that a Chinese would stand no chance of winning for the college. He was right; my subject is out of place.

LAWSON: I'll see Professor ——

CHUN: No, it is too late now. I made up my mind then that if Christ's teachings are out of place in this country they are out of place in China. And I wrote to my father. I tried to tear up the oration. (*Takes a manuscript from his inside coat pocket.*) Yet somehow I kept it—perhaps as a charm to bring back my old faith. But no, it is only good to be torn up. (*Starts to tear it.*)

LAWSON: Don't tear it, Chun. (*Rising and walking over to him.*) Isn't there any one who can help you in this? Don't you know a single person who has lived a true Christian life?

CHUN (*slowly*): Yes, I know one; Barbara's father, Dr. McKean, my old teacher. He is Christlike.

LAWSON: Then why not ——

CHUN: But what is one such man in this world? It does not pay to live like that. No, I have already written my father that I would come back to China to be his son again, that I have given up Christianity. I go soon to join him. (*Tears the paper in his hands. The door opens and* STANLEY *rushes in.* CHUN *starts for his hat.*)

STANLEY: Is Barbara here?

LAWSON: No; what's the matter?

STANLEY: I've just got word she was going to her grandmother's and they said I was to meet her here.

(CHUN *starts to leave the room.*)

LAWSON: See here, Chun, I am not through with this matter yet. Come back in ten or fifteen minutes, won't you?

CHUN: Very well, Dr. Lawson. (*He goes out right door.*)

LAWSON: Do you suppose Barbara has had sudden news from her people in China?

STANLEY: That's just what I'm afraid of. She's been mighty worried about them lately, Dr. Lawson.

LAWSON: There has been trouble in their part of the country, I believe.

STANLEY: I don't really know much about it, but Barbara did say once that the consul had ordered all foreigners out of the place.

LAWSON: Didn't her parents leave?

STANLEY: I think not—I think they stayed for fear the work would go to pieces if they left. There's Barbara now. (*The door to the right opens and* BARBARA *enters.*) Hello, what's up, Barb?

BARBARA: So you did get here, Stan—I'm awfully glad. Dr. Lawson, a cable came from my mother this morning.

LAWSON: From your mother? I hope it isn't anything serious.

BARBARA (*taking a cablegram from her pocketbook and handing it to* LAWSON): My father has been—it's about my father.

LAWSON (*reading*): Your father—killed! My dear girl!

STANLEY (*snatches cablegram from* LAWSON): Killed? Oh, Barb! Your father! I—why—Barbara, it can't be!

(*The door opens and* WANDA *runs in.*)

WANDA: Oh, Barbara! I've just heard. How perfectly dreadful! (*She puts her arms around* BARBARA.) You poor kid! And you look so calm. How can you stand it?

BARBARA: I can't even realize it yet. I have been so busy thinking and planning.

WANDA: Isn't there some little thing I can do for you? The girls said you were going to your grandmother's.

BARBARA: No, thank you, Wanda. The girls in the dorm helped me pack. Dr. Lawson, I came to tell you that I won't be coming back to school. I am going on out to China as soon as I can get passage.

LAWSON: China! Why, what do you mean?

STANLEY: Going to China!

WANDA: China! What's the idea?

BARBARA: I want to go out to my mother, and help her with the work.

LAWSON: But that's quite impossible. The board would not permit such a thing.

BARBARA: My grandmother would pay my expenses, so I can go independently of the board.

STANLEY: You don't really mean it, Barbara?

BARBARA: Yes, I do mean it. They must have some one to take father's place, to help mother, because I know she will stay there.

LAWSON: They need a man. A young girl like you would not be able to do anything in China.

WANDA: Of course not. And anyway, I should think you would be scared to death.

BARBARA: Why should I be scared? I was born out there and can speak the language. That makes all the difference in the world. The people feel that I am almost one of them. They know I love them and understand them.

STANLEY: But, Barb, it's dangerous; you simply can't go out there—

BARBARA: What do I care about danger for myself when there is danger for all the Christians in Si Yun? They must have some one to help hold them together.

STANLEY: Well, if they are really Christians can't they hold themselves together?

WANDA: Yes, fine Christians they are if they can't do that much!

BARBARA: That is easy for all of you to say, but you don't know what it means to be a Christian out there, the way things are now. Their own countrymen call the Chinese Christians "running dogs of the foreigners." In father's last letter he told of some preachers who were in prison because they would not give up the foreign religion. Think of the faith my father has given them! I must carry on his work.

LAWSON: You must finish school first, Barbara. Then if you still want to go, you may.

BARBARA: It may be too late then. Don't you see, *now* is the time? They are all stirred up, the whole country is in turmoil, and the future of China depends on how this struggle turns out. I've got to take my part in helping China to become Christian.

STANLEY: I never knew you cared so much for China.

BARBARA: I didn't either, Stanley, until this happened. Now my old love for China has come back again. She is a wonderful country! We can't understand in this country what a difference

there is between being a Christian and not being one, and what it means not even to have heard of Christ. I have always wanted to do something worth while with my life, and now it will be wonderful to have even a small part in the rebuilding of China.

(*The door to the inner office opens and* MISS KING *enters.*)

MISS KING: Dr. Lawson, there is a long-distance call for you from San Francisco.

LAWSON: Excuse me, please. I'll be back in a moment. (*Goes out with* MISS KING.)

(STANLEY *walks over to* WANDA *and speaks meaningly.*)

STANLEY: There's a telephone call for you, too, Wanda.

(WANDA *smiles knowingly and goes out, right.*)

STANLEY: Have you forgotten about us, Barb?

BARBARA: Oh, Stan, that is the hard part! I'm going to miss you so.

STANLEY: Doggone it, Barb, you can't be serious about this! I love you, and I can't let you go. I never saw you like this before—and it makes me love you more than ever. You know I love you, don't you, Barbara?

BARBARA: Yes, Stanley, I know you do.

STANLEY: Funny thing, it makes me feel so small and no account. I need you more than anything on earth; you won't forget that, will you?

BARBARA: How can I forget, Stan?

STANLEY: Just think, Barb, how wonderful and important it all was —just you and I—"chums for life." You couldn't cover that up even in China, could you?

BARBARA: I'm not trying to cover it up.

STANLEY: And remember how glorious it was, all our plans for next year—a little home—all that. I have hardly been able to wait to graduate—all because of you.

BARBARA: Yes, it was wonderful—and glorious.

STANLEY: And now, you poor brave girl, just thinking about other people way off there—when you've lost your own father, I want to mean more than ever to you now, Barb.

BARBARA: Oh, Stan! I—but my mother needs me, and all the Chinese Christians in Si Yun.

(WANDA *enters from right.*)

STANLEY: You're throwing your life away to go out there. You're too good for them.

WANDA: Listen, Stan, if I loved her half as much as that, I wouldn't let her go alone. I'd pick myself right up and trot along with her.

STANLEY: Don't be foolish. What could I do in China?

WANDA (*with a shrug*): You've got me!

STANLEY: I'd be worse than no good out there. Darn it all, Barb! We love each other and it isn't right to——

BARBARA: Please, Stan, don't make it harder. My father was willing to die for China, so I ought to be able to give up something.

(STANLEY *turns slowly away from her and walks to the back of the room with hands clenched. The right door opens and* CHUN *comes in.*)

CHUN: I beg your pardon, is Dr. Lawson in?

WANDA (*crossly*): Sure, but he can't be bothered with you now.

(CHUN *looks around, then starts to leave the room. Just as he reaches the door,* WANDA *starts up.*)

WANDA: Oh, say, Chun! You're just the boy we want. You know all about this laundryman's war in China. I ask you now, is that the place for a Christian?

CHUN: What do you mean?

WANDA: Could we let an innocent young thing like Barbara wander off to China? You tell her she can't go. Maybe she'll listen to you.

CHUN: Barbara go to China?

BARBARA: Yes, Chun, I am going as soon as I can.

CHUN: But you must not.

WANDA: That's right, Chun; go to it.

CHUN: You really mean you intend to go?

BARBARA: Yes. And why do you say I must not?

CHUN: Because it will be no use. China wants to settle her troubles with no interference from foreigners.

BARBARA: Why do you say that? I can't understand why so many Chinese have turned against the Americans. But you——

CHUN: I, too, will help to——

BARBARA: Chun, not you!

CHUN: Yes, I. Too long the white races have been exploiting our country, and now we are going to fight for liberty and a——

STANLEY (*coming up to* BARBARA): There you are, Barb. That shows you what an ungrateful race they are. You go over and try to do something for them, and they turn around and drive you out.

WANDA: Yes; just when you're nice to them and give them a little education they begin to get fresh.

CHUN: I'll prove to you what kind of race we are. You white races think the world can't live without you. But China has brains and ability of her own. If you would only stop exploiting our country, we could show you she can be one of the leading nations of the world.

STANLEY: I knew it! I've tried to believe in China, but that's too much—I'm through. You can't even appreciate America's leadership.

CHUN: Because you wear that uniform you think you can rule the world. You Americans talk about world peace, but all the time

you are training soldiers to back up your own commerce. China can learn to play your game, too.

STANLEY: Don't you know you are talking mighty dangerous business? Don't forget we've got gunboats. And believe me, we'll use them, too, if you try to start trouble.

BARBARA: Don't, Stan.

CHUN: Is that the helpful way of Christian America, to educate the world with warships and soldiers?

STANLEY: And why do we have to have our armies and gunboats? You'd make a hell of this world if we didn't hold you down, you lawless——

BARBARA: Oh, Stan, stop! (*shaking his arm*).

STANLEY: Well, I guess that ought to settle China for you!

BARBARA: Don't you see how terrible it will be unless we do something about it? And armies and gunboats aren't going to help. The spirit of Christ is the only thing that can save China, and we must not waste any time about taking it to her.

CHUN: Thank you, we don't want your Christianity. It has been a selfish mask. You may keep your religion in this country, and we will work one out in China for ourselves.

BARBARA: But it isn't just our religion. Christ was not an American. He was born in Asia, and he belongs to you even more than to us. He belongs to the world, and his teachings are the only ones by which the world can live.

CHUN: But I tell you Christianity is a failure.

BARBARA: Maybe we Americans are making a failure of it; if so, it is up to China, it's *your* responsibility, to make a success of it. And I am going out to help China show the world she can do it.

CHUN: I say you shall not go.

BARBARA: I must go.

STANLEY: But, Barbara!

(*The office door opens and* Dr. Lawson *comes quietly into the room.* Barbara *does not see him.*)

Barbara: They can't do any more than kill me as they did my father.

Chun: Your father? What?

Stanley: Hadn't you heard her father was killed?

Chun: Killed! Your father! Oh, no, it can't be! Tell me he was injured, hurt, he was ill, anything, but not killed!

Barbara (*gently*): He was—killed, Chun. Oh, you loved him, didn't you?

Chun: Loved him! He was my great teacher, my ideal. And now he is dead. Who dared touch him? Tell me who it was!

Barbara: I don't know. We don't really need to know, do we?

Lawson (*stepping up*): I've just had a long-distance call from the board rooms in San Francisco telling me about this sad affair. The name doesn't mean anything, but they said, "Killed by a troop under the leadership of Fu Si Liang."

Chun: Fu Si Liang! Oh, my God! Fu Si Liang is my father! Do you mean my father's troops have killed Dr. McKean? How did they come to do this thing?

Barbara: Your father—— Oh, Chun!

Chun (*his expression growing wild as a sudden thought comes to him*): It was a month ago that I wrote my father that I would soon join him, for I was through with Christianity. My letter must have encouraged them to—I didn't know. I never thought —oh, God! I am responsible for this. I have killed my teacher, my friend! (*He walks back to the table, sits in the chair, and buries his face in his hands.*)

Stanley (*walking over to him and putting his hand on* Chun's *shoulder*): Chun, old man——

Chun (*shaking off the hand*): Don't touch me. I am a traitor; a murderer. You must all hate me. I should die for this.

STANLEY (*putting his arm on* CHUN'S *shoulders again*): Don't, Chun!

BARBARA: No, Chun, you mustn't say that. We don't hate you.

CHUN (*walking back to the middle of the stage*): How can *you* say that? You, most of all, must hate me.

BARBARA: There has been too much hate in the world, Chun. Your father needs your *love* now, and so do all those people out there who are trying to make something of China and don't know how to go about it. It isn't your fault, Chun. Don't——

CHUN: And you can forgive them and me? You knew your father had been killed, yet you did not hate the Chinese?

BARBARA: Of course not. Don't you see, my father loved China more than his own life—and I love it too.

CHUN: His spirit lives in you! Oh, I see now, there is something in Christianity that makes people do wonderful things! Your father has been killed, but his work and his spirit must not die. They must be carried on.

BARBARA: And it is we who love him who must do this.

CHUN: It is I who shall do this—I who received so much from him and then was untrue. I must try to make his spirit live in the Chinese people.

BARBARA: And I——

CHUN: No, you must finish school first.

BARBARA: But my mother needs me.

CHUN: I will be a son to your mother and guard her with my life.

LAWSON: Barbara, I know your mother would want you to graduate, and you have only one more year.

BARBARA: But I want to be doing something for China right away.

CHUN: There is much you can do in America right now. Your missionaries tell us of Christ. We come over to America. We

find race prejudice. Greedy nations take away our liberty and America is indifferent.

WANDA: But, Chun, that's just our Western way. We mean well—honestly we do.

STANLEY: I'm sorry I said what I did, Chun. Maybe our armies and gunboats can be sent over to help protect you.

CHUN: No, no! That would only cause more trouble. It is friends we need, like Dr. McKean and Barbara—over here, as well as in China. China.

BARBARA: Yes, friends can do what armies cannot do.

STANLEY: Then I want to be a friend. (*Shakes hands with* CHUN.) And, Barb, I've got to think this thing through. But with half a chance, and a girl like you to work for—maybe I will find I can do something over there.

BARBARA: Oh, Stan! do you mean that you might go out with me if I wait?

WANDA: Sure he will. You wouldn't let a little thing like an ocean stand between friends, would you?

CURTAIN

THE GOLDEN RULE IN COURTSHIP *

BY

CORONA RAYLE COOK

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CHARACTERS

CHARITY CLARK, *a maiden lady*
MARGARET CLARK, *her niece*
JIM WILSON, *Margaret's fiancé*

THE GOLDEN RULE IN COURTSHIP

The rising curtain reveals a comfortable living room with an outside door at center back. A door up right leads to the dining room and another door towards the back left leads to the bed rooms. A davenport is placed down left. At the end of it is a small stand on which are magazines. Back of the davenport is a table with a lamp on it. There is a library table a little to the right of the door at the back. To the right of this is a chair, and between it and the table is a floor lamp. There is a chair down right. Attractive pillows are in the chairs and on the davenport. There are rugs on the floor. There is some sewing piled on the davenport, and a newspaper is on the floor by the chair down right. CHARITY CLARK *enters from the door right. She is about sixty-five years old, dressed in a black dress of a most unrevealing style; the high collar has a white lace collar pinned around it and caught with a large brooch. The long sleeves are adorned with neat white lace cuffs, which she straightens as she comes into the room. The ample skirt just barely misses the floor as she walks. Her hair is concealed by a net cap. She is pleasant appearing, yet shows a certain determination even in her walk. She deftly goes about straightening the room, picking up the paper and putting it on the table where she rearranges the magazines. She lights the lamps, then picks up the sewing, which proves to be a luncheon cloth; she examines the work on it with a nod of approval but instantly checks the smile which had started to add a pleasant touch to her features.*

A happy voice off stage calls "Kitty, kitty, kitty," and an instant later, just as AUNT CHARITY *lays the sewing on the table back of the davenport,* MARGARET CLARK *enters from the door right. She is about twenty-three years old, and moves with the*

grace of a healthy, joyous girl. She is becomingly dressed in pale green.

MARGARET: Have you seen Pompey? I've called and called and he seems to be nowhere in sight or hearing, so I put his saucer of milk outside the back door where—— (*She stops and looks about the room, pleased with its appearance. Impulsively she goes to* AUNT CHARITY, *who is at center, just putting the sewing on the table.*) Oh, you darling, you've straightened it all up nice and cozy, haven't you? (*Kisses* AUNT CHARITY.)

AUNT CHARITY (*trying to appear indifferent to* MARGARET'S *caress*): Well, it needed it some, I guess. Seems as though a house takes a great deal of time, especially when sewing is left to clutter up a room.

MARGARET (*with a rippling laugh*): Oh, the sewing—isn't it pretty, Aunty? Now confess that you like it.

AUNT CHARITY (*grudgingly*): You've done good work, Margaret, but it's a waste of time, for we already have all that we can use.

MARGARET (*patiently*): Aunty, dear, you know this is for my Hope Chest. (*Defiantly.*) I'm going to tell Jim to-night that I'm ready to marry him.

AUNT CHARITY (*consternation, self-pity, love, and surprise struggling for supremacy*): Margaret!

MARGARET (*drawing* AUNT CHARITY *over to the davenport where they both sit*): I know that you are surprised, but I have stood it as long as I can. I don't want to hurt you, when you have done so much for me, but Jim needs me, too, and I've got to be fair to him. We need each other. Then, too, he has waited now longer than most would.

AUNT CHARITY (*drawing her hand away from* MARGARET'S *and sitting very straight*): Yes, and he will wait longer, if I have anything to say about it!

MARGARET: Why do you dislike him so, Aunty? He's clean; he loves

me; he has waited patiently, but it isn't fair to keep him waiting forever.

AUNT CHARITY: He hasn't any ambition. Why did a college graduate go into the grocery business?

MARGARET: He felt that if a college education was good for one profession, it would help another. You know you'd rather trade there than at any other grocery in the village.

AUNT CHARITY: Well, maybe I do. But I cannot think much good of a young fellow who wants to take a poor old woman's only hope and joy away from her.

MARGARET (*softly*): He'd love you, too, if you'd let him.

AUNT CHARITY (*sniffing*): If I'd let him! What's to hinder him, I'd like to know?

MARGARET: Why, just the very way you act. You hold him off at arm's length and fix him with your eye! You are the kindest Aunty on earth, but you are cruel to Jim. You've been both father and mother to me ever since my own parents were taken from me (*she moves over and puts her arms around* AUNT CHARITY) when I was such a baby, just three years old.

AUNT CHARITY (*tenderly*): I liked to do it, Margaret. It gave me something to live and work for. (*Tensely, almost bitterly.*) But now you want to leave me, just as I could depend on you! (*Sorrowfully.*) You want to leave the old lady and let her shift for herself.

MARGARET (*kissing her*): Why, Aunt Charity, you know I love you and never had any idea of leaving you alone.

AUNT CHARITY (*wiping her eyes*): I always thought you loved me. But lately I have begun to wonder.

MARGARET: But I love Jim, too, and in a different way. I want to make a home for him, as well as help you. You surely must remember that there is a time when your mind fairly aches for something to do, and your muscles itch in their desire for some

worthy task. . . . What were you doing when you were twenty-three?

AUNT CHARITY (*with a start*): Why, child, I was just that age when your father and mother were married!

MARGARET: And you managed everything, after father left.

AUNT CHARITY: Yes, I managed the farm and home, too, for my parents were old.

MARGARET: Poor Aunty! You worked too hard.

AUNT CHARITY (*quickly*): No, I really enjoyed it.

MARGARET (*her eyes twinkling*): That is just what I was trying to tell you I wanted! Something really useful to do! (*Somewhat dreamily.*) After Jim and I knew that we really loved each other we began to plan for our home—a family—a home which would radiate love. We wanted to live our Christianity.

AUNT CHARITY: Live it! Wanted to live it? Well, why don't you live it as you are?

MARGARET: I've tried to, and so has Jim. I gave up the school teaching idea because you wanted me to. I've been out of college nearly a year now and if I can't do anything else but keep house, I want Jim to be a part of my life now. (*Softly.*) Jim needs me more than ever since his mother died in the winter.

AUNT CHARITY: Why?

MARGARET (*with a little sigh*): Why, pretty soon he won't even be a good advertisement for a boarding house, let alone one for a "balanced diet" such as he advocates in his grocery "ads." Honestly, that food they have been serving must be terrible, for he has lost *pounds,* although he won't complain! I've heard you say yourself that Selina Moore's cooking was greasy enough to slide from the kitchen to the table and back again!

AUNT CHARITY: Oh, you can plead *his* cause well—but how about *me?*

MARGARET: We'd want our home to be your home, of course; you *know* I'd never think of leaving you all alone.

AUNT CHARITY (*bristling*): Well, I'm not so awfully old but that I *could* live alone. But I don't choose to, since I've done my duty by some one else all my life. I want some joy of my own! (*Rising.*) Don't you ever think of the Golden Rule? Why don't you try it?

MARGARET (*rising and looking a moment at* AUNT CHARITY. *As the two women stand looking at each other,* AUNT CHARITY'S *face softens and* MARGARET'S *eyes begin to sparkle. She suddenly hugs* AUNT CHARITY *in an impulsive way*): All right, let's both try it to-night! Just for one evening. You be me and I'll be you. Jim's coming and that will give us a good chance to try it all out.

AUNT CHARITY (*aghast*): Change places!

MARGARET (*sparkling*): Yes, why not?

AUNT CHARITY (*grasping at any flaw in the idea*): But Jim!

MARGARET: He will like it as well as we do.

AUNT CHARITY (*protesting*): But I won't like it!

MARGARET (*shaking her finger playfully*): You know you used to play "dress up" games with me. This is another one (*soberly*) with everything at stake.

AUNT CHARITY: You certainly are more foolish than I ever even imagined!

MARGARET: But it is not foolish.—Don't you see——

AUNT CHARITY (*interrupting*): No, I don't!

MARGARET: Aunty, I know that you love me, but you just won't be fair in this.

AUNT CHARITY: I'm doing what is best for you.

MARGARET: Well, *please* let's trade places one evening and see if you can get my viewpoint.

AUNT CHARITY (*rising*): And have Jim Wilson mushing around over me? (*Starts up stage.*)

MARGARET (*rising*): He isn't that kind!

AUNT CHARITY (*turning to face* MARGARET): Well, it looks that way.

MARGARET (*following her*): Don't you see? This argument isn't getting us any place. Let's really give this idea a fair try-out.

AUNT CHARITY: And if I do?

MARGARET: I hope that we will see things in a different light. So much depends on it!

AUNT CHARITY (*aggrieved*): Yes, it does! If I'd let you, you'd go off with that fellow and perhaps live a miserable life and I would be left all alone after all these years of taking care of you with the hope of having you for my comfort in my old age. (*Goes to chair back stage, fumbles for handkerchief, finds it and dabs at her eyes.*)

MARGARET (*fumbles with sewing on davenport table*): Why, Aunt Charity! Such a dark and dismal picture. You know that you'll be happy with us, and of course Jim and I will be happy even though you do make him out to be so black.

AUNT CHARITY (*coming toward* MARGARET): But if I should do this foolish thing, you aren't to take it for granted that I will feel as you do about this young man's love-lorn ways.

MARGARET (*going to her again*): Oh, I don't expect you to. You see it is just to sort of get each other's viewpoint and to (*playfully*) "see ourselves as ithers see us."

AUNT CHARITY (*she has been studying* MARGARET'S *face as she speaks. She now smiles and nods her head in a sprightly way*): All right, young lady, we'll do that. And you be sure to watch. Just see how you two cooing doves look.

MARGARET (*pats* AUNT CHARITY'S *hand, not seeming to notice the last expression*): That's a good Aunty. I knew you would be

fair. (*Glances back toward door.*) I think that Jim will be here soon so we must hurry. You run in and slip on one of my dresses and I'll be there in a minute to help you.

AUNT CHARITY (*who has started toward the door left during this speech, stops short*): Put on one of your dresses! (*Glances down at the skirt of her own dress, then at* MARGARET'S.)

MARGARET: Sure. Run along now like the good Aunty you are. (*She goes to* AUNT CHARITY *and they both start toward the door left.* AUNT CHARITY *goes reluctantly. Just as they reach it a knock is heard at the outside door.*) There's Jim! You go on and I'll be there as soon as I can explain.

(AUNT CHARITY *goes out left.* MARGARET *opens the door, back.*)

MARGARET (*with suppressed excitement*): Hello, Jim. Come in.

JIM: Hello, Margaret. Gee, you look great!

(*These two speeches are said almost simultaneously, and as* JIM *enters. He is a well-built young man, about twenty-five years old, with pleasant features. He impresses one as being dependable, refined, yet not what is termed "polished." He gives the appearance of being a wholesome individual whose acquaintance one would cultivate. He carries a box of candy under his left arm and is holding a bunch of violets in his left hand. He looks at* MARGARET *with a hungry look. He starts to kiss her but* MARGARET *steps back enough to be out of his reach. She gives a ripply, joyous laugh, but when he starts toward her she subsides immediately, looking sober.*)

MARGARET (*laying her hand on the hand that holds the flowers, and drawing* JIM *to the center of the stage*): Listen, Jim, Aunt Charity and I have made an agreement for to-night and I need you to help me.

JIM: What's the matter? Has Aunt Charity read the riot act? Here I bring a tribute of flowers from the old garden and find

the best girl in the world acting as though all the foreign powers had started mobilizing against us! Just let me have a chance at Aunt Charity once!

MARGARET (*taking the flowers*): Thank you, Jim, for the flowers. But oh, Jim, you must help me!

JIM (*giving her the candy and rolling up his sleeves*): I don't understand, but I'll do anything you say,—name the scoundrel and I'll do him to the finish!

MARGARET (*putting a hand on his arm*): No, wait, not that! Aunt Charity and I have decided to get each other's way of looking at life and just for to-night she is to be me and I am to be Aunty. You (*with a shake of the finger*) are to court her for all that you are worth!

JIM (*aghast*): Margaret!—*Aunt Charity?* (*Pushes sleeves into place.*)

MARGARET: Sh-h-h, not so loud, she'll hear you. Yes, Jim, and for goodness' sake do a good job! Love her, talk to her like you do to me when we plan for the future. Do it as well as ever you can, Jim!

JIM (*desperately*): But, Margaret! I *couldn't* to *her!* (*Wipes his forehead with his hand.*)

MARGARET (*persuasively*): Yes, you can. You can do anything, once you set your mind to it.

JIM: But give me something easy—like swimming the Atlantic!

MARGARET: Why, Jim! Aunt Charity is pure gold when you get beneath that wall of reserve she has built up.

JIM: Maybe so, but I still have to discover it. But, Honey, I *can't* do it. Make love to any one but you? I can't—not to *her* and right before *you!*

MARGARET: Why, Jim Wilson, a fellow who could get all smashed up playing foot-ball and grin when it was over, afraid of a little evening's tête-à-tête with a harmless old lady?

JIM (*with emphasis*): But she isn't harmless, she's got me scared of my own shadow when I come here.

MARGARET: Poor boy! I'm sorry.

JIM: Well, if you're going to be sorry for me, I guess maybe I can do it. I don't like sympathy.

MARGARET: There! That's better. Now remember, this is serious. It is for our right to happiness and love that we are doing this.

JIM (*looking tragically about*): I feel very much like a martyr. But since you are the boss of this team I might as well do as you say.

MARGARET: Good! Now remember! Whatever Aunt Charity does or does not do, *you keep on making love!*

JIM (*saluting*): Yes, Captain.

MARGARET: Here, take these flowers and give them to Aunt Charity, and the candy, too.

(JIM *takes them and tries to kiss* MARGARET *but she backs away.*)

MARGARET (*enthusiastically*): It's going to be a regular lark. We'll make her see our side, won't we? Then if you do real well, you may have that kiss you are so anxious for. Now remember, do your best. I must go and dress. Take a good look at me for you won't know me the next time you see me.

JIM: Well, hurry, before I lose my nerve!

MARGARET: I'll need about ten minutes so you can be getting more nerve all that time. If Aunt Charity comes in, *love her.*

(MARGARET *goes out left.* JIM *puts the violets and candy on the table up stage and sinks his hands in his pockets, buried in thought. He walks about, whistling a little snatch of tune absently—this may be "Keep the Home Fires Burning," beginning with "There's a Silver Lining," etc. Suddenly he picks up the flowers, comes down stage and offers them to an imaginary person. This does not seem to suit him. He grabs the chair, down right, and begins to make love to it. He*

tries to embrace it, but stops, shaking his head. He falls on one knee before it, with his right hand over his heart and his left hand extended in a melodramatic attitude. He gets up; shakes his head; plunges his hands into his pockets again. Then he walks up to it as though arguing. Another shake of his head. He wipes his forehead with his handkerchief.

AUNT CHARITY *appears in the doorway left. Her hair is neatly arranged and looks youthful despite the streaks of gray. She has on a lavender dress, the skirt of which she continues to try to pull down all through the first part of the remainder of the play.*)

AUNT CHARITY (*explosively*) : Margaret, where *are* you. How *can* you wear your dresses so short? (*Pulling it down.*) I had no idea that one could feel so exposed—— (*Looks up and sees* JIM.) Oh!

(*During the first of this speech* JIM *is so engrossed with his own problem that he does not hear* AUNT CHARITY, *but he turns and sees her just as she looks up and sees him, so that their gasps are almost simultaneous.*)

JIM : Oh!

(*He straightens his tie, adjusts his coat and goes back to the table to pick up the flowers and candy.* AUNT CHARITY *bends her knees a little to make the dress seem longer. She pulls at first a sleeve and then the skirt. There is an awkward moment.* JIM *looks around for* MARGARET. AUNT CHARITY *looks around as though to retreat. Both decide to make the best of the situation.*)

AUNT CHARITY (*primly*) : Good evening, Jim.

JIM (*shaking hands with her*) : Good evening, Miss Cl——, I mean Margaret. Nice weather we are having this morning, I mean, —would you have some flowers? (*He holds out the flowers. He rather squares his shoulders and seems to take command*

of himself and the situation. He is like a swimmer who has taken the first icy plunge in cold water.) I came past the old garden this evening and picked these for you. They are where my mother planted them years ago, when she was a bride. She used to love them so. When I saw them this evening I thought of her—and of you.

AUNT CHARITY (*takes the flowers and smells them. Her expression softens a little*): I love them, too. (*Briskly.*) But picking flowers isn't any business for a man—especially when his business needs him.

(JIM *tries to put his arm about her, but she draws away. He does succeed in taking her arm and leading her to the davenport.*)

JIM: Let's sit here and talk, dear.

(*They sit; she as far to the right as possible, he about the middle. He puts the box of candy down beside him on the left. He takes out his handkerchief and mops his face.* AUNT CHARITY *is meanwhile having difficulties with her skirt.*)

JIM: When a man loves a girl as I love you he wants to pick some posies to give him more time to think of her. As I picked these I thought of the home we would have, of the flowers you'd want and how I'd help with the heavy work when the store closed of evenings. Besides, I picked these during my supper hour.

AUNT CHARITY (*sitting up straight*): Didn't you have any supper?

JIM: Oh, some—I didn't care for much.

AUNT CHARITY: Why don't you eat more? (*Looks at him critically.*) You look peaked.

JIM (*evading the point*): Oh, I do eat. I'm saving up until I can come home to a meal that you have prepared.

AUNT CHARITY (*deciding that she has started the wrong topic, looks around*): Where's Margaret? Why doesn't she come?

JIM: You mean Aunt Charity?

AUNT CHARITY (*discomfited, pulls at her skirt*): Yes.

JIM: How is she this evening? Is she well?

AUNT CHARITY: Yes.

(*There is an uncomfortable silence.* MARGARET *enters from left. She pauses in the doorway to take in the situation, then comes down stage in a very determined way. She has on* AUNT CHARITY'S *dress, cap, and shoes and carries some knitting in her left hand. She walks up to* JIM *and primly extends her hand.* JIM *rises and they shake hands.*)

MARGARET: Good evening, young man, you seem to have little else to do of an evening but to come here. We are glad you enjoy our society so much.

AUNT CHARITY (*expostulating*): Mar——

MARGARET (*interrupting, coolly*): Margaret, did you start to say something?

AUNT CHARITY (*subsiding*): No, A—— Aunt Charity.

JIM: I hope that you are well this evening, Miss Clark.

MARGARET: Yes, thank you. (*Turning.*) I hope you two won't mind me. I think that I'll sit back here and work. Just go ahead with your talking, don't let me disturb you.

(*She goes up stage to the chair beside the table, where she sits. She takes up her glasses and knitting.* JIM *sits down again, a trifle closer to* AUNT CHARITY.)

AUNT CHARITY: Do I act like that?

JIM: No, dear, you act just like your own dear self!

AUNT CHARITY: Oh.

JIM (*feeling more at home in his rôle, now that* MARGARET *is on the scene*): Margaret (*both women start but the two in front do not notice the real* MARGARET), I want us to talk to-night about the future.

AUNT CHARITY: I don't.

JIM (*firmly*): But I do. You know that you are all the world to me (*warming up to the subject*) and I mean to have you if I have to wait forever. (*He comes closer to* AUNT CHARITY.) I said if I have to wait forever, but I don't intend to do it if I can help it. I want you right *now*. (*He tries to put his arm around* AUNT CHARITY *but she stiffens like a ram rod.*)

MARGARET: Ahem! (*Peers over her glasses.*)

AUNT CHARITY: Sir!

JIM (*mops his brow*): But, Margaret! You can't expect a fellow to be patient *all* his life. I've waited years for you now!

AUNT CHARITY: It's good for you. Develops you.

JIM: Well, pretty soon I'll be so developed that I'll just carry you off bodily. If only your Aunt could see it *our* way!

AUNT CHARITY: She sees what is good for you.

JIM (*ignoring the remark*): I ordered the paper to-day for our home. From the samples that you liked. I can hardly wait for it to come.

AUNT CHARITY: Humph.

(MARGARET *clasps her hands delightedly, then starts knitting at a furious rate.*)

JIM: And say, Margaret, can't you come up soon and decide what of the old furniture we will need and what new pieces we will buy?

AUNT CHARITY: Old furniture is valuable. (*Stops, surprised that she has spoken to the subject.*)

JIM: Yes, and some of it is rare, but other pieces I didn't think you'd care for. You'd want *some* new, of course, to start with. Then we could add to it as we get more money.

(*Intense silence on the part of* AUNT CHARITY. MARGARET *can scarcely restrain herself from coming down to join in the talk.*)

MARGARET (*with an effort to maintain her rôle*): That sounds like

a waste of good furniture to me. Your mother's furniture, too!

JIM: Yes, but mother used to talk about some that would need to be replaced with new.

AUNT CHARITY: Well, a body does get tired of looking at some of those grotesque old pieces.

JIM: And the garden! I saw your Aunt out working with her flowers to-day. Do you suppose we could go up and work in our garden to-morrow evening? Could you, Margaret?

(AUNT CHARITY *is silent, looking straight ahead.* JIM *looks despairingly back at* MARGARET, *who motions for him to go ahead.*)

JIM (*he looks first at* AUNT CHARITY'S *uncompromising countenance, then draws a deep breath, looks past her into space*): Margaret, when I think of you I always compare you to a rare and delicate flower. I feel that I must shield you from the rough winds, must care for you, protect you. But you are more than a flower, for you have a soul. Your life not only blossoms for itself, but you help every one around you to flower. Your smiles make folks and flowers, both, to blossom.

AUNT CHARITY: Humph.

JIM: These are some of my thoughts as I go about my work. Oh, Margaret, I cannot live without you! (*Passionately.*)

AUNT CHARITY: Humph!

JIM: I have my Margaret planted in the garden of my heart and in that setting I like to think of her . . . you . . . not only in our home that is to be, but among the flowers that are always talking to me of her.

AUNT CHARITY (*more softly*): If I didn't know how flowers can talk to one, I would be very much tempted to call you *very* sentimental.

(MARGARET *has dropped her knitting during this, leaning forward: she now recovers herself and takes up her work again.*)

JIM (*putting his left hand down beside him where it touches the candy box*): Oh! I had nearly forgotten this. (*He hands it to* AUNT CHARITY.) Here is something I brought to you.

AUNT CHARITY (*taking the box*): To me?

JIM: Sure, why not? Don't you like candy?

AUNT CHARITY: Yes . . . only no one ever gave me a box of candy in my life.

(MARGARET *gives a little gasp.*)

JIM (*softly*): Really?

AUNT CHARITY: Nor flowers . . . but once. The one who gave them to me was killed the next week when his team ran off.

(MARGARET *looks shocked and her face softens in sympathy.* JIM *pats* AUNT CHARITY'S *shoulder unrebuked.* AUNT CHARITY *recovers her poise, opens the box, takes a piece of candy, and offers some of it to* JIM *who also takes one.*)

AUNT CHARITY: Won't you take Mar— her some?

(JIM *takes the box back to* MARGARET *who helps herself to a piece. She slips her hand in his for just an instant. Then he goes back down stage. As he passes the table back of the davenport he notices the sewing. He takes his place again.* AUNT CHARITY *has been sitting, looking dreamily at the flowers while he has been gone. He returns the box to her lap.*)

JIM: Where's the luncheon set you were working on the other day?

AUNT CHARITY: I don't know.

JIM (*reaching back to the table*): Isn't this it? (*Gives it to her.*)

AUNT CHARITY: Yes, what of it?

JIM: Oh, I want to talk about all those lovely things you have been making. Let's plan what else we need.

AUNT CHARITY: I don't want to.

JIM (*examining the luncheon cloth*): This is beautiful, and you have put so much work on it. (*Tries to hold her hand.*)

AUNT CHARITY: Anything that is worth doing is worth doing well. (*Freeing her hand.*)

JIM (*sitting as close as possible. Talks animatedly*): Won't our new silver that we are going to buy, and mother's willow-ware dishes look pretty on that? We'll have some flowers from the garden in the center of the table. Then with one of those good dinners that you will cook!!! Ummm! Ummm! Won't it be wonderful? And you sitting over there (*pointing*), and Aunt Charity there (*pointing*), and maybe some day a little tot here, and me here (*again pointing*). And eat! I'll serve all the rest of you and then devour every bit that's left.

(MARGARET *has stopped working, from here on she just sits, taking it all in. It is hard for her to play her part.*)

AUNT CHARITY (*not quite so stiffly*): All you think of is food! (*She fingers the luncheon cloth absently. Her eyes and expression begin to soften.*)

JIM: Well, with these women coming to the store all the time and asking what to have for this or that meal, I *have* to think about food. Won't you help me?

AUNT CHARITY: I?

JIM: Won't you make out some menus for me to suggest?

AUNT CHARITY: Why—why, yes—I presume so.

JIM: That's a dear. (*Tries to kiss her. She instantly stiffens again, but* JIM *talks on rapidly, trying to overcome her prejudice and regain the ground he seems to have lost.*) You know I feel a responsibility for the health of the community. I feel as though I must help people to have better food.

AUNT CHARITY: Humph!

JIM: That is one reason I am so anxious for us to be together for

always, although the *big* reason is because I love you! (*This time he succeeds in hugging her and* AUNT CHARITY *submits without seeming to realize it.*)

MARGARET: But what's to become of me?

(AUNT CHARITY *sits as though in a trance.*)

JIM (*rising*): Why sacrifice us both? We both love Margaret. Why not all live together?

MARGARET: Would you want an old woman like me?

JIM: People are no older than they think they are. Sure, we want you, we never planned it any other way! You aren't old either. (*Softly.*) Not as old as my mother was and I never thought she was old. Your very name, "Charity," means *love*. Why can't your love be big enough for this?

AUNT CHARITY (*rising hastily. Sewing, candy, flowers fall to the floor unnoticed. She shows great emotion*): Children!

MARGARET (*starting forward*): Why . . . What . . .

AUNT CHARITY: Come here, Margaret! (MARGARET *comes and stands on her right.* JIM *stands at her left. All are at center down stage.*) Forgive me, both of you, please. I have been a selfish old woman. I always thought of myself as the one who really loved Margaret, but I have seen it in a new light to-night.

MARGARET (*softly*): I, too, have found out something.

AUNT CHARITY: I have found that it must mean a great deal to a girl to have a big fellow like Jim (*puts her hand on his arm*) to really love her. If he could say all those things to me (*looks down at herself*) what could he say to you? (*Smiles at* MARGARET. *Turning to* JIM.) I have been prejudiced against you, Jim. I thought you wanted to rob me of all I had.

MARGARET (*putting her arm about* AUNT CHARITY): And I have been selfish with you. I have thought mostly of Jim's happiness and mine, although I have always thought of you being in our home. To-night I saw and felt how you must have been feel-

ing. To have two people talk of home, garden, hope chest, and all the joy that goes with love and a home . . . to plan for it . . . while I sat by and knit, made me know how you have felt all these months. Forgive me, Aunty.

AUNT CHARITY: Why, bless you, child! . . . Then there were two sides to this story after all! . . . I guess a dose of the Golden Rule was good for us all.

CURTAIN

MODERN MAGI *

BY

CHARLES STAFFORD BROWN

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CHARACTERS

JERRY, *a young prairie farmer*
BETTY, *his wife*
THE BABY, *a bundle in a blanket*
DOCTOR
BISHOP
SHERIFF
TRAIN CONDUCTOR

MODERN MAGI

The scene is the interior of a prairie farmhouse in the Northwest. The time is Christmas Eve, 1927. Poverty, somewhat disguised by womanly care and neatness, is evident in all the furnishings of the room which first meets our view. The outside door is at the right. There is a folded gunny-sack against the bottom of the door, helping to keep out the storm which is raging about the house. Down stage from the door there is a window, partly frosted over, with snow banked in the corners of the panes of glass. Beneath the window there is a table, bearing a lighted kerosene lamp, a large Bible, two or three farm papers, and a small potted cactus which is blooming healthily. Beside the table, next to the door, there is a cheap wooden rocker. At the down stage end of the table there is a cheap cane-bottomed straight chair.

In the rear left corner stands a cheap kitchen stove, behind which is a woodbox with sticks of wood visible. Upon the stove there is a teakettle. A chair like the one near the table stands near the stove. Down stage of the stove, on the wall, there is a homemade set of shelves which serves as a cupboard. Below this there is a cheap kitchen table, covered with white oilcloth. Upon this table stands a tin waterpail, with the handle of a dipper sticking out of it. Below the table, on nails, hang a tin dishpan and a tin washbasin. A large wooden candy pail sits on the floor beneath the table, in lieu of plumbing.

On the rear wall there is an advertising calendar. There are also two or three small framed pictures. Near the curtained door in the rear there is a wall telephone, operated by a hand crank, of course.

The large door at the rear leads to the bedroom—the other room of the house. There is only a curtain to close the opening. For

the most part, this curtain is down, obscuring the view into the bedroom; but from time to time, as directed, the curtain is drawn aside. Then the head of a wooden bed comes into view. Upon this bed lies BETTY, *the wife; but as the head of the bed is turned directly toward us, we can see nothing of her except as she reaches out one hand to get the glass of water that stands on the chair beside the bed.*

As the curtain rises, JERRY *is discovered at the window, looking out. He is watching the weather. It doesn't please him; he shakes his head, and looks again, harder than before, evidently trying to see something through the storm. He scrapes a small clear place in the frost on the window, looks again, and again shakes his head. Then he scoops up a little pile of snow with one finger from the edge of the pane, where it has drifted in through a crack. He turns his head toward the curtained opening in the rear and speaks.*

JERRY: How are you feeling, Betty? (*There is no audible answer.* JERRY *goes to the curtain, draws it aside, and stands looking down at* BETTY *upon the bed. He repeats, with tenderness and anxiety in his voice*): I say, how are you, Betty girl? Feel better?

BETTY (*invisible but audible*): I'm afraid I don't feel so good, Jerry.

JERRY: Hadn't I better phone for Mrs. Peterson to come over?

BETTY: I hate to ask anybody to come out in this awful weather, Jerry. How does it look now?

JERRY: Well, there's more wind, and it's getting colder. Snow's coming in under the window.

BETTY: Jerry—I'm so scared!

JERRY: Why, it isn't anything to be afraid of. We've had a lot of storms as bad as this one, or worse.

BETTY: I don't mean the storm, Jerry. I mean—*me.*

JERRY (*a note of alarm in his voice*): You—you mean—you're afraid it's time for—for—

BETTY: Yes.

JERRY: Gosh—*I* don't know anything about babies!

BETTY (*tears in her voice*): And I don't either.

JERRY: Then I'd better call the doctor or somebody, right away! (*He drops the curtain, hurries to the telephone, and cranks it. He listens, but there is no answer. He cranks it again, harder than before. No answer. He bumps it once or twice with his hand, and listens; but no answer. He calls "Hello! Hello!! HELLO!!!" But there is no reply.*)

JERRY (*turning toward the bedroom, still holding the receiver in one hand, and gesticulating with the other*): Hey, Betty, the phone's on the blink again! What am I going to do now?

BETTY (*in sudden pain*): Oh!

JERRY (*dropping the receiver, running to the bedroom curtain*): What's the matter?

BETTY: Jerry—you've got to get somebody pretty quick, I'm afraid! (JERRY *drops the curtain, comes back to the telephone, and tries it once more. It is still dead. He hangs up the receiver, and looks out of the window at the storm. The wind has risen and can be heard howling. He shivers involuntarily; stares hard, trying to see something outside the house.*)

JERRY: Say, that's some storm! Can't even see the barn any more!

BETTY: Is it as bad as that, Jerry?

JERRY: Yes, and it's getting worse.

BETTY (*after a pause*): Oh!

JERRY (*trying the telephone again*): It's no use, Betty. Dead as a doornail. And hear that wind! (*He comes again to the curtain, and draws it aside.*)

BETTY: I know it, Jerry. I can hear it.

JERRY: Peterson told me yesterday that the worst of a storm like this generally blows over in a day. It ought to be better to-morrow some time.

BETTY: But I can't wait until to-morrow, Jerry! Oh!

JERRY: I know it. (*He reaches inside the bedroom, gets a heavy coat from a nail, and steps outside the curtain to put it on.*) I'll get back as soon as I can, Betty.

BETTY: Where are you going, Jerry? Don't go!

JERRY: Over after Mrs. Peterson. (*He draws the curtain aside as he speaks.*)

BETTY: And leave me alone here?

JERRY: What else *can* I do? I've *got* to get somebody; *I* don't know anything about babies, or nursing, or anything like that!

BETTY: No, Jerry! Don't you leave me! If you didn't get back in time, I'd—I'd just die! I know I would! Don't you go away!

JERRY: But what *am* I going to do? The telephone's dead; and anyhow, the doctor could never get out here in this storm!

BETTY (*with a show of bravery, which is not entirely successful*): Don't you worry, I'll get through somehow. Babies are born all over the world, and I won't be the first one to face it without any doctor, or any nurse, or any medicine, or anything but just my husband beside me, loving me. Some women don't even have love to help them, Jerry. Please don't leave me! You *do* love me, don't you?

JERRY: *Love* you, Betty? My God!

BETTY: Then stay with me, Jerry! You'd get out there in that storm, and lose your way, and you'd never come back—and then I wouldn't want to live, either! Please don't leave me! (*Pause.*) Oh!

JERRY: I wish to heaven I'd never brought you out to this God-forsaken hole! I wish I'd stayed in town! There were plenty of

doctors there—and we could have had all the help we wanted. But out on this damned prairie——

BETTY: Don't, Jerry. We weren't happy in town; you know that. You felt all cooped up; and I wasn't well at all. And we have had such a wonderful year out here! It has been the happiest year of my life, and I'm not going back on it, no matter if—no matter *what* happens next. I'm *glad* we came out here! And even if there isn't any doctor, *you* are here. But don't leave me, Jerry!

(JERRY *takes off his coat and hangs it up again. He comes away from the curtain, dropping it behind him. He glances at the telephone; at the window; and shakes his head. Then he walks to the table, and slowly, as if by accident, he picks up the Bible. It falls open in his hand to the story in Luke of the birth of Jesus. He reads a little of it aloud, to himself.*)

JERRY: "And she brought forth her first-born son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; for there was no room for them in the inn."—Huh! She wasn't out on the prairie alone in a blizzard, anyhow! (*He drops the Bible on the table.*) And there were plenty of women in the crowd, too. (*In a rush of decision, he falls to his knees and prays.*) Listen, God! I'm up against it right now, and You've got to help me! I can't get out of this house, and I can't get any help from the telephone. You're supposed to be the God of storms and the God of love—if You are, and if You hear me now, then You've got to do something for us! You know I love her—and we want our baby so much! (*Pause.*) I'll pay back every cent of that money; honest I will! I never meant to keep it anyhow! (*Pause.*) But You just *got* to get some help for us! And right away, too, God!

(*There is the scream of a train whistle outside, and the sound of an engine's bell. The whistle stops, but the bell continues to ring. After it has rung for several*

seconds, JERRY *opens his eyes, turns his face to listen, then scrambles to his feet and runs to the window.*)

JERRY: Betty! Did you hear it? The train is stopping right out in front of the house! Maybe if I hurry I can get some help from the train!

(*He moves the kerosene lamp nearer the window; rushes to the bedroom; throws on his coat; starts for the door; dashes back again to the bedroom, gets a fur cap, jerks it on, and rushes again to the door.*)

BETTY: Jerry! Oh!

JERRY: I *got* to, Betty!

(*He jerks the door open, letting in a blast of snow, and collides with the* CONDUCTOR, *who has come up on the step.* CONDUCTOR *wears a heavy coat over his blue uniform; is middle-aged and thin; wears glasses and a mustache.*)

CONDUCTOR: Hey, there, what's the idea? Running into a man——

JERRY (*pulling* CONDUCTOR *inside, slamming door*): Is there a doctor on that train?

CONDUCTOR: How do I know? And what's all the rush? Have you got——

JERRY: I've got to get a doctor, I tell you, in a hurry! Don't you know if there is a doctor on your train?

CONDUCTOR: No, I don't know if there is a doctor on my train! How in time *would* I know? I ain't running a hotel; I don't keep a record of my passengers. Maybe there's a dozen doctors on that train. Have you——

JERRY: I don't want a dozen doctors; I want *one.* And I want one *quick!*

CONDUCTOR: Well, then, why don't you telephone for one? (*Indicates telephone.*)

JERRY: It's dead. Out of order. I can't.

CONDUCTOR: Out of order, eh?

JERRY: Yes. Is there——

CONDUCTOR: Well, if you can't telephone for a doctor, I can't telephone for help either. I was going to let the Division Office know that we are stuck out here in a big drift, and something's busted on the engine. This sure is some storm! Regular old ring-tailed peeler! Worst I've seen since the year that——

JERRY: I tell you, I've got to get a doctor, *in a hurry!*

CONDUCTOR: What do you want a doctor for? *You* ain't sick!

JERRY: Here, get out of the way; I'll go look myself. (*Starts to open door again.*)

BETTY: Jerry! Don't you go away!

JERRY: There—*that's* what I need a doctor for!

CONDUCTOR (*jerking his head toward bedroom*): Your wife?

JERRY: Yes.

CONDUCTOR: What's the matter with her?

JERRY: It's a baby!

CONDUCTOR: Good gosh! I'll go see if there's a doctor! (*Hurries out.*)

JERRY (*calling after him*): And a nurse! Two nurses!

(*He takes off his coat and hat, goes to the bedroom, and hangs them up again. He draws back the curtain and hangs it on a nail so that it stays back out of the way, and seats himself on the chair beside his wife's bed. He puts the glass of water on the floor.*)

JERRY: We are going to have help after all, Betty! (*Pause.*) Wasn't it funny how soon that engine whistled after I prayed?

BETTY: Jerry, when you were praying, what was it you said about money?

JERRY: Did I say something about money? When?

BETTY: Out there—when you were praying for me—us.

JERRY: Oh, it wasn't anything, Betty. Forget it.

BETTY: But you said you would pay it back, and you said you never meant to keep it anyhow. What money were you talking about?

JERRY: And I *will* pay it back, Betty!

BETTY: But what was it? When did you——?

JERRY: It was the money I paid down on this farm, Betty. It wasn't —I mean, we didn't—you see, I didn't have any money to buy this place, and I didn't have any credit either, and everything cost so much; and so I had to—that is, the money was there in the till——

BETTY: Where? Whose till?

JERRY: Benson's Store, where I was working when we got married.

BETTY: But——

JERRY: So I took it out of the till, and—I didn't put it back.

BETTY: You—took money? From Benson's Store?

JERRY: Yes.

BETTY: And you didn't put it back?

JERRY: No.

BETTY: But that was stealing! No! No, Jerry, tell me it isn't true!

JERRY: It's true, Betty.

BETTY: Then you're a—a—a *thief!*

JERRY: Yes, Betty.

BETTY: Oh, Jerry, why did you? (*Begins to cry.*)

JERRY: I never meant to keep it, Betty. (*He reaches over and captures her hand.*) And I won't keep it, either. I'll pay it all back, somehow, with interest. Honest I will.

BETTY (*crying harder*): You—a thief! My baby's father—a thief!

JERRY: Betty, honey, don't say that! I took the money, but I'll pay it back!

BETTY: Even if you paid it back a hundred times, you'd still be a thief! Oh—oh—oh! I don't want a baby now! I don't want to live any more!

JERRY: Don't, Betty! I *will* pay it back, honest I will! Don't turn away from me, Betty! Please! I hate the whole mess as bad as you do. I never stole anything before, and I never will again. Truly I won't! (BETTY *withdraws her hand from his grasp.*) *Please* don't take your hand away from me! I'll pay all of it back! (*Pause.*) You don't really hate me, do you, Betty? You don't mean *that?* (*Pause.*) Betty, honey!

(*There is no reply but the sobbing of the overwrought wife. After a moment,* JERRY *comes out of the bedroom, dropping the curtain behind himself. He walks uncertainly over toward the table; stares blindly at the Bible a moment; then bursts out savagely.*)

JERRY: Damn all money that's easy to steal! And all poverty that makes a man want what isn't his own! And all weaklings without enough backbone to be honest! And me for hurting the one I love!

(*There is a stamping of feet outside, and the sound of voices.*)

CONDUCTOR'S VOICE: Hey, in there! Open up the door!

JERRY (*recovers composure, opens door, admitting* CONDUCTOR, DOCTOR, BISHOP, *and* SHERIFF): That was a quick trip. Is one of you a doctor?

DOCTOR: I am. (*He puts down the small leather bag which he carries, and sheds his overcoat, cap, and rubbers.*)

CONDUCTOR: Found him in one of the Pullmans, I did. I talked him into coming.

DOCTOR: It didn't take a great deal of talking. (*He is out of his wraps by now, and stands revealed as a muscular, active,*

youngish man, with a confidence-inspiring air of conscious ability.) Where is the patient? In here?

JERRY: Yes, sir.

DOCTOR (*going to curtain and looking inside at* BETTY): I'll be in there as soon as I can wash.

JERRY (*to* CONDUCTOR): Wasn't there any nurse?

CONDUCTOR: Couldn't find any. But I brought these two men along in case we needed somebody beside the doctor. (*Indicates* SHERIFF *and* BISHOP, *who are standing holding their hats.*)

JERRY: Well, take off your wraps and sit down. I certainly appreciate your coming.

(BISHOP *and* SHERIFF *begin to remove coats.* CONDUCTOR *stands with hat in hand, but does not remove his coat.*)

DOCTOR (*rolling up sleeves, having removed suit coat*): Got any hot water? I want to wash up. (JERRY *gets teakettle from stove, puts washbasin on table, pours water into it, cools water with dipperful from the pail, and returns the kettle to the stove.* DOCTOR *takes soap from the bag and proceeds to wash, talking as he works.*) Got any clean bedding? Sheets? Blankets? Get 'em out and warm 'em up by the stove.

JERRY: I'm sorry, sir. We haven't any bedding except what's on the bed.

DOCTOR: That's not enough. (*To* CONDUCTOR.) You go and get a couple of blankets from the Pullmans.

CONDUCTOR: Why—I can't take things from the Pullmans!

DOCTOR: Don't stand there arguing! Go get those blankets!

CONDUCTOR: But I—

DOCTOR: Listen: I need blankets, and I'm going to get 'em if I have to go and steal 'em myself. You go get 'em and I'll pay for 'em, if that's any better.

CONDUCTOR: We-e-e-ell, if anybody's going to steal 'em I suppose it ought to be *me*. I'll go. (*Puts on hat; exits.*)

DOCTOR (*looking for place to empty the washbasin*): Beastly hole you live in here, young fellow. (*Discovers the candy pail, and empties the basin with a grimace of distaste.*) Regular cowbarn.

JERRY: I suppose so. But it never seemed like a cowbarn to me until a couple of minutes ago.

DOCTOR (*drying hands on a towel he takes from bag*): And rotten poor taste to have a baby born on Christmas Eve. I'd be home this minute if the train hadn't hit that drift.

JERRY: But it was good luck for us you got stalled here.

DOCTOR: I suppose so. Now let's see the patient.

JERRY: Right in here, sir. (*Leads* DOCTOR *into bedroom, dropping curtain.*)

(*While the* DOCTOR *has been washing, the* SHERIFF *and the* BISHOP *have been making themselves at home. The* SHERIFF *has taken off his coat and has thrown it into a corner; the* BISHOP, *after looking about for a place to hang his coat, has carefully folded it inside out and has laid it over the back of the chair at the end of the table, at the right. The* SHERIFF *sits down in the rocker with a loud sigh of relief.* BISHOP *sits gingerly on the extreme edge of the chair on which he has hung his coat.* SHERIFF *is fat, partly bald, and not very neat. He employs a very large quill toothpick with deadly effect, sucking air between his teeth meanwhile, to the immense disgust of the* BISHOP. *The latter is meticulously dressed in clerical garb, is middle-aged, and possesses a full, heavy, imposing head of hair. He wears spectacles on a heavy black ribbon. After the* DOCTOR *and* JERRY *leave the room, there is a short silence, broken by the* SHERIFF, *who takes cigars from his pocket and offers them to the* BISHOP.)

SHERIFF: Smoke?

BISHOP: No, I thank you. I *never* smoke.

SHERIFF: No? Well, then I won't either. (*Puts cigars back in pocket.*) I guess we might as well get acquainted. The Doc'll call us if he wants us. You look as if you might be a preacher of some sort. Are ye?

BISHOP: Well—I am *Bishop Lee.*

SHERIFF: Dog my cats! I never met a real live Bishop before; at least not so's to know it. But I knew you must be some sort of a preacher on account of havin' your collar turned around that way. (BISHOP *wiggles uneasily.*) I don't really go to church enough to know much about it. I used to go to Sunday School some when I was a kid; folks made me go. And Mary—she's my wife—made me go to some revival services six-seven years ago. But I don't take much stock in 'em.

BISHOP: Religion—er—religion is the cornerstone of our civilization.

SHERIFF: Yes, I shouldn't wonder. I never had anything agin religion; but there's lots of church folks that's awful hard to get along with. I remember Lem Hawkins, down to the Forks. He was a great hand for religion. Used to git converted two-three times a year. But it never took very good with him. He could lick his wife and kids with one hand and shout hallelujah with the other. Had to put him in jail last week. (*Pause.*) Me, I'm sheriff of Clark County, this state.

BISHOP (*glad the conversation has shifted*): Indeed. What brings you out on Christmas Eve?

SHERIFF: Oh, I'm after a fellow over in Montana; got the warrant right here in my pocket.

(*Takes warrant out and exhibits it.*)

BISHOP: Why, you have no authority in Montana, have you?

SHERIFF: Not as a rule. But you see, Jim Blake, sheriff over there, is an old friend of mine, and he's laid up sick. So I'm actin' as his deppity.

BISHOP: Oh, I see. What is this party wanted for? What is his crime?

SHERIFF: He stole some money.

BISHOP: And he was a young man, I'll wager.

SHERIFF: Yep. Twenty-three.

BISHOP: It has been my conviction for years that the present generation is both godless and immoral. This is an added proof.

SHERIFF: Oh, I don't know. There's a lot of good ones among 'em, too. They ain't all bad.

BISHOP: Yet most criminals to-day are young.

SHERIFF: I guess generally when the kids ain't right it's the fault of the old folks.

BISHOP: Nonsense! My own daughter ran away from home to marry a man I never saw. Do you think *I'm* to blame for that?

SHERIFF: I dunno. Mebbe so. Mebbe so.

BISHOP: What do you mean?

SHERIFF: Well, now, she wouldn't hardly run away from home unless she was afraid you wouldn't let her marry this man, whoever he was.

BISHOP: And indeed I would have forbidden the marriage! She was quite correct if she assumed that I would interfere!

SHERIFF: Sure. And so she ran away. She couldn't marry with your permission, and she knew you'd never change; so she left. There you are!

BISHOP: And you place the blame for her ruined life on *my* shoulders?

SHERIFF: She ruined her life, did she? Wasn't her man good to her?

BISHOP: I don't know. She never wrote to me, nor came home again. But whether she ruined her own life or not, she has ruined mine. She was my only child, and all my hopes were

centered in her welfare. I could have helped her to positions of importance and influence; and ultimately she could have married somebody of social prominence. That's all gone now; and I wash my hands of the whole affair. She has made her bed; let her lie in it!

SHERIFF: By gosh, I don't blame her for runnin' away from you!

(*The* CONDUCTOR *enters with an armful of blankets, which he hangs over the chair near the stove.*)

CONDUCTOR: There. Got three blankets and a couple of sheets. That ought to do. Now I got to go back and fix it up with the Pullman conductor. He don't know I took 'em. Anything happened yet? (*Jerks head toward bedroom.*)

SHERIFF: Nope. Not yet.

CONDUCTOR: Let me know if you need more help or anything. (*Exit.*)

DOCTOR (*calling from bedroom*): One of you men come in here!

BISHOP (*jumps up, starts for bedroom*): Coming!

DOCTOR: Bring those blankets with you, if they are warm.

BISHOP: Right! (*Picks up blankets, feels of them, then holds them directly over the stove for a few moments.*) Be there in a minute, Doctor.

SHERIFF: Say, Bishop, you ain't as hard as you think you are.

BISHOP (*embarrassed*): Why—it is a Christian duty to care for the sick and afflicted.

SHERIFF: Say, if you are doing that because it's a duty, you better give me them blankets and you come back here and sit down.

BISHOP: Sit still. I—I—love babies.

SHERIFF: That's better.

(BISHOP *goes to bedroom with blankets.* JERRY *holds back curtain for him to enter, and stands in doorway, holding back the curtain.* BISHOP *hands the blankets to* DOCTOR.)

BISHOP: Here you are, Doctor.

DOCTOR: Thanks.

BISHOP (*turning, seeing* BETTY *for the first time; thunderstruck*): BETTY!

BETTY: Oh, hello, dad. I made my bed, as you said, and I'm lying on it. But I'm glad you came—even if you didn't mean to. Oh!

BISHOP: I can't believe it! You, Betty—in a place like this!

BETTY: Why not? I'm his wife, and—babies don't wait—for storms to stop. Oh!

BISHOP: Do you love him very much, Betty?

BETTY: Do you think—I'd be here—if I *didn't?* Oh!

DOCTOR (*who has put the blankets away at one side, and has returned*): Here—you get over on that side and let her hold on to your hand. (BISHOP *goes out of sight around the foot of the bed.*)

(JERRY *looks at the group in the bedroom a moment, then comes out into the other room, dropping the curtain behind himself.*)

DOCTOR: Now, young woman, breathe this. Slowly—like that.

(JERRY *crosses the room and stands before the* SHERIFF, *head hanging.*)

JERRY: I heard what you told him. I guess I'm the fellow you are after.

SHERIFF: Huh?

JERRY: I say, I'm the thief you are looking for.

SHERIFF (*takes out warrant and looks at it*): Your name Gerald Barton?

JERRY: Yes. They call me Jerry.

SHERIFF: Well, wiggle my ears!

(*There is a pause which lengthens until it grows painful.*)

JERRY: Well, arrest me—or something!

SHERIFF: I s'pose you *are* arrested.

(*Another pause.*)

JERRY: Well, aren't you going to handcuff me and take me away?

SHERIFF: How in time can I take anybody anywhere in this storm? And anyhow, nobody's going to leave this house until this business (*jerking thumb toward bedroom*) is finished. Go on back to your wife.

JERRY: She doesn't want me. Her dad is with her. She won't even let me hold her hand.

SHERIFF: How come? She said she loved you; I heard her.

JERRY: Do you think she'd admit she didn't—to *him?*

SHERIFF: Well, no. What's the trouble?

JERRY: She just found out I stole that money. She didn't know it until a little while ago. Now she hates me. And I hate myself.

SHERIFF: How did you come to take the money?

JERRY: I was broke, and I wanted to get married and come out here. I was working for Benson's at the time. One night, just before closing time, the cashier left the till open for a minute or two. I saw it, and I sneaked over and took all the bills. Nobody saw me, and I hid them under some dry goods. Of course they searched everybody, but they didn't find the money. A couple of days later, after I had taken the money away, I quit the job and came out here. That's all.

SHERIFF: Didn't you know they'd catch you sooner or later?

JERRY: I thought I could get away with it. And I was going to pay it back out of the crop this Fall, only there wasn't much crop, and a poor price for what there was.

SHERIFF: And what are you going to do about it now?

JERRY: I don't know. Go to jail, I suppose.

SHERIFF: And what about your wife—and the baby?

JERRY: I tell you, I don't know!

SHERIFF: I s'pose they haven't a thing to live on while you're—away.

JERRY: No. Oh, God! (*He collapses into a chair, dropping his head forward on his arms upon the table.*)

SHERIFF: Huh—funny you young fools don't think of these things until after you turn crooked!

(*There is a considerable pause, broken by a tiny wail from the bedroom.* JERRY *jerks upright, but does not leave the chair. The* SHERIFF *sits up straight, but also remains seated. Both look toward the bedroom.*)

SHERIFF: There. That's over. You're a father.

JERRY: And a thief. (*Pause.*) Going to jail.

(*The bedroom doorway is filled with the* BISHOP, *somewhat mussed up, carrying a bundle wrapped in a blanket, and wearing on his face the seraphic expression of a brand-new grandfather.*)

BISHOP: She's a boy! Er—he's a girl! Confound it, I mean, he's a boy!

SHERIFF (*to* JERRY): Go get him, son.

JERRY: I'm not fit to touch him. (*He is under great tension.*)

SHERIFF (*rising heavily and waddling over to the* BISHOP, *who has advanced to the center*): Let me look at him. (BISHOP *lifts one corner of the blanket, so that the* SHERIFF *may see the baby.*) Gosh, ain't he red!

BISHOP: They all look that way when they arrive. He'll fade.

SHERIFF: I sure *hope* so! He looks like he'd been boiled!

DOCTOR (*entering from bedroom, rolling down sleeves*): Splendid case. Sound and healthy as I ever saw. Not a bit of trouble. Couldn't have been better if we had been at a hospital.

JERRY: Is *she* all right, Doctor?

DOCTOR: Absolutely. She's asleep yet, but she'll wake up any minute

now. (*He advances to the* BISHOP *and* SHERIFF *at center, and looks over the* BISHOP'S *other shoulder at the baby.*) I'll leave some directions for her and the baby—feeding and care and so on. She ought to stay in bed for at least two weeks. You'll have to get somebody in here to take care of her, and to help with the work for a while after she gets up again. I'll send you additional material on the baby's care when I get back to the office.

JERRY: Better send it to the Petersons'. They are our neighbors. I won't be here.

DOCTOR: You won't be here? You'd *better* be here! Why—what—where——

(JERRY *opens his mouth to reply; but before he can say anything, the voice of* BETTY *is heard.*)

BETTY: I love you, Jerry. Come here.

DOCTOR: There—she's awake.

JERRY: Can I go to her, Doctor?

DOCTOR: If you don't, you're an idiot!

(JERRY *runs into bedroom.*)

BISHOP (*to* SHERIFF): I heard the whole thing. Now I'd like to fix this mess up, if I can. It was partly my fault, anyhow. This baby doesn't look like the son of a thief. How much did he steal?

SHERIFF: About a thousand dollars, I guess.

BISHOP: I'd be glad to pay the money back, if the store would withdraw action.

SHERIFF: I dunno. Mebbe so. Mebbe not. Anyhow, what am I goin' to do with this here warrant? (*Takes warrant out of his pocket.*)

BISHOP: Didn't you say that warrant was for use in Montana?

SHERIFF: Sure; this chap's address is the next town, according to this warrant.

BISHOP: Well, this isn't Montana. The state line is half a mile west of here. We are still in Dakota.

SHERIFF: Well, scratch my back! I can't arrest him anyhow! And I'm glad of it!

(JERRY *appears in bedroom door in time to hear* SHERIFF'S *last speech.*)

JERRY: I don't care; I'll go anywhere, do anything, gladly, now—to get straight. She doesn't hate me; she loves me—she told me so. And she loves our baby. (*Comes to* BISHOP.) Let me have—my son.

BISHOP: Well, handle him gently. He isn't a pillow. No, no, the other way! His head's at *this* end! There, that's right. When you have handled babies as long as I have, you'll know how to go about it.

JERRY: I beg your pardon, sir; I'll try to be a good father.

BISHOP: I hope to heaven you are a better one than I've been. I came very near making a botch of the job.

JERRY (*lifting a corner of the blanket and looking at the baby*): Baby son, your folks love you a lot. I hope you take after your mother for looks. (*To others.*) Honest, men, isn't that about the finest baby boy you ever saw?

BISHOP: No doubt about it. (*Brings a chair down center for* JERRY.) Here, sit down. Even a new baby gets heavy after a while.

(JERRY, *holding the baby, sits center;* BISHOP *is behind him;* DOCTOR *on one side,* SHERIFF *on the other, all looking at the baby.*)

SHERIFF: Huh—I never saw a new baby that looked any different; but ain't he soft an' little?

JERRY (*ignoring* SHERIFF): Christmas Eve. And a new-born baby boy. In a "regular cow-barn." And Three Wise Men from the East, bringing gifts. It's all here but the angel, isn't it?

BISHOP: She's here, too; in the next room.

JERRY: I wish I could celebrate, somehow.

(JERRY *looks at the men, who grin back at him.* BISHOP *is having trouble with his nose and eyes.* DOCTOR *goes to cupboard, gets two tallow candles, brings them back, and mutely asks* SHERIFF *for a light.* SHERIFF *paws over his vest, but finds no matches. Then he takes out the warrant, rolls it up, sticks it into the top of the kerosene lamp, and holds it there until it catches fire. Then he lights the two candles with it; and the three of them stand there behind and beside* JERRY, *each holding a light.*)

JERRY: Thanks. That's better. I wish we had some music.

(*At this point the telephone rings violently.*)

ALL: There! How's *that* for music?

CURTAIN

THE CHRISTMAS PAGEANT OF THE HOLY GRAIL*

BY

W. RUSSELL BOWIE

* Copyright, 1927, by W. Russell Bowie.
Published in pamphlet form by The Abingdon Press, New York City and Cincinnati, Ohio. Price 25 cents per copy.

INTRODUCTORY

This pageant was written to be given in a church, and was actually presented at the morning service on the Sunday before Christmas. Its whole purpose and mood are devotional, and the full effect of the pageant can be secured only in surroundings which are worshipful. Whenever reproduced, it should be given, if possible, not in a hall but in a church, and should be presented with as great beauty as circumstances will allow. The chancel would, of course, need to be of reasonable size and clear of the usual church furniture, such as choir benches, etc. The choir should sit in the body of the church, near the front, and it is they who sing the hymns which are introduced in the course of the pageant.

If the circumstances require that the pageant be given in a hall rather than in a church, the hall should be so arranged as to suggest as completely as possible that reverential mood which the church itself would convey. If local talent and resources make this practicable, scenery may be used for the background of the pageant. This, however, should be simple.

Yet the nature of the pageant is such that it can be adapted to very varied resources in the way of preparation. It will be more effective in a beautiful church, but it can be presented in a very simple place if done with a devotional spirit. It will be most beautiful if some skillful musician provides on the organ the musical interludes which are indicated, but it can also be presented with no music at all save the singing of simple hymns. The children who represent the different characters have no words to learn. The entire story is read by the minister, or some other person in his place, from the pulpit or other vantage point in the chancel of the church. The children should be carefully rehearsed to carry out the actions indicated in the story as read. All the essential movements and gestures are indicated in the story itself. The children enact, as the story is read, that which they are described as doing.

Those who wish to give the pageant with their own Sunday school, should first read the story and visualize it in their mind's eye. The text itself will indicate how the characters appear, and in large part their attitude and gestures. Some dramatic insight on the leader's part can very easily supply all the guidance which the pageant itself does not indicate. It has been found in experience that three or four complete rehearsals are sufficient to have the pageant smoothly and reverently presented by children of from twelve to fourteen years of age.

It will help the congregation understand and follow the pageant more vividly if there is printed and distributed a very simple order of service and program of the pageant, indicating the scenes to be imagined and the characters in the order of their appearance.

For possible convenience of suggestion, indications are introduced into the text as to the location of the entrances and exits used in the church where the pageant was first given. The letter R represents a door leading from a choir room at the extreme forward right-hand side of the church as one faces the chancel. From this door the children would come along the front cross aisle, and up the steps at the front of the chancel. The letter B represents a door in the right-hand rear wall of the chancel itself. The letter M represents the middle aisle.

COSTUMES

These suggestions for costumes are based on the costumes which were used in the original production. Materials may be easily obtained by borrowing from members of the congregation. In this way the cost is reduced to a minimum, handsome materials and varied effects are obtained, and more people become interested in the production. Furs, capes, silk scarfs, dressing gowns of corduroy or velvet, draperies and embroideries as well as beads and jewels can be used with good effects.

JOSEPH. A black cassock tied with a girdle and a dark turban.

MARY. A flowing white dress with a blue cape and a blue or white veil.

THE SHEPHERDS wear short tunics to the knees, of any drab, rough material, bare feet, legs, and arms. A short cloak may fall from the shoulders and a piece of fur thrown over one shoulder and coming down on the breast. Each should carry a staff in his hand.

THE WISE MEN have long tunics of different colors, reaching to the feet which are sandaled, girdles of contrasting colors and capes suspended from, or falling over, the shoulders. Care should be taken to harmonize the colors and also to make each figure distinct, using different combinations of color with each one. They should wear crowns with flowing veils.

THE ANGELS wear white cheesecloth robes, wide sleeves lined with gold-colored cheesecloth. Wings of gold and golden haloes, girdles of pale-colored very thin silk, or a rainbow scarf of thin silk.

THE DAMSELS, the PAGE, the SIX KNIGHTS and KING ARTHUR should follow as closely as possible the Abbey illustrations of The Holy Grail in the Boston Public Library, of which colored prints can easily be obtained.

In making costumes for the pageant the following suggestions may prove helpful:

Turbans can be made of white or colored cheesecloth or any piece of soft material which gives the color required.

Sandals are best made from the soles of bedroom slippers, but where these were not obtainable they have been made from pasteboard, which is not so desirable. They are laced with strips of leather or colored tape, and again, if necessary, strips of cloth may be substituted.

Helmets can have the crowns of old derby hats for their foundations; the parts attached to make the visor, etc., can be of cardboard and attached to the crown by paper clips. If derby hats are not to be found, pasteboard can be used or tin helmets made. The helmets not of tin should be painted with aluminum paint and ornamented.

Girdles can be made of dyed cheesecloth or scarfs. For the Robbers, Shepherds, etc., a simple cord or rope is used.

The robes for the WISE MEN can be made from dressing gowns of rich colors belted at the waist with wide scarfs. The capes or cloaks can be draped from curtains, tablecloths, or may be simply pieces of material, the art being in combining the colors and arranging the drapery in graceful lines.

The furs for the SHEPHERDS can be stoles of fur, perhaps with a head, or a deer's skin.

Armor is effectively made by sewing together string dish cloths of very wide mesh and dipping them in aluminum paint.

Breastplates can be made of cardboard or buckram and painted with aluminum. They are held in place by elastic bands over the shoulders and under the arms.

Wings for the ANGELS can be made of wire and buckram and gilded; ingenuity may be used in shaping the wings in graceful lines.

Haloes are cut from cardboard in a wide ring and gilded. On either side is a small slit, and through these pass a band going over the forehead and holding the halo in place, but free from the top of the head. This band can be of elastic covered with tinsel.

The crowns for HEROD and the WISE MEN can be made of pasteboard and gilded, with jewels and tinsel trimmings.

The casket carried by one of the WISE MEN to hold the gold can be made of pasteboard, gilt, and jewels, but sometimes a very hand-

some box can be borrowed. A censer and a silver vase or a brass vase may be used for the other WISE MEN.

The Cup of The Holy Grail may be a silver bowl, within which is an electric flash-light. A slight frame above the brim supports the veil. This is of very thin linen. A piece of tissue paper over the bulb softens the light, and as the Chalice is held high over the head a soft glow shows under the veil.

PROPERTIES

In addition to the costumes for the various characters, the following simple objects are needed as properties for the pageant.

Scene I

A throne for the King at left front of chancel.
An altar, or representation of one, at the center and back of the chancel. (This remains in place throughout all the scenes.)
An illuminated altar book or some other colorful book to represent this.
A gong to be struck outside, unless the organ has chimes which can be used.
A piece of soft white stuff to be used by the angels as a screen.
Small objects of one kind or another for the shepherds to carry in their hands as gifts.
Two rich-looking boxes or caskets for the Wise Men to carry.
A handsome goblet, if possible of silver.

Scene II

A number of handsome chairs or seats, all but two of them alike. Those two should be larger and handsomer.
A trumpet.
A sword for the King and a sword for Modred and, if possible, swords for the other knights.

Scene III

The King's throne.
A small casket as of gold.
A plume.
A handsome robe or cape.
A Maltese cross of white cloth.

Scene IV

The seats of the knights, as in Scene II.
A cluster of large keys.
Two or three lances.
A small flag or pennant on a pole.
A sword.
The same goblet as in Scene I.

SCENES

The four scenes take place in the Hall of the Castle of Camelot.

Scene I

(Characters in the order of their appearance)

Christmas Eve

King Arthur
Two Angels
Joseph and Mary
Two Shepherds
Three Wise Men

Scene II

Twelve Days Later at Epiphany

Launcelot
A Page
King Arthur
Bedivere
Gareth
Tristram
Percival
Modred

Scene III

Christmas Eve a Year Later

Launcelot
Galahad
Modred
A Page
Three Damsels
Another Damsel

Scene IV

Christmas Morning

A Page
King Arthur
Bedivere
Tristram
Gareth
Percival
Launcelot
Galahad
Two Angels

THE CHRISTMAS PAGEANT OF THE HOLY GRAIL

SCENE I. READER: Long ago in Britain lived King Arthur, and round him in his high castle of Camelot gathered the knights whom he had chosen. It is of Arthur and of his knights, and especially of Launcelot and Galahad, that you shall hear to-day. And you shall hear of Arthur's dream, and of his great desire. At Christmas time he dreamed, and in his dream he saw a vision of the Christ-child, and of all those who came to Bethlehem to bring him gifts; and then was born the king's desire to win for Christ the gift which only the perfect knight at last should bring. Watch, therefore, and consider, and understand.

(*Enter, slowly and thoughtfully,* KING ARTHUR.)

Into the hall of the castle at Camelot came King Arthur, in the long, late silence of a Christmas Eve. He moved slowly as one whose thoughts were far away. Somewhere in the castle a bell chimed the hour of midnight (*gong strikes twelve*), and dimly through far corridors came the sound of voices singing very softly to herald the Christmas day.

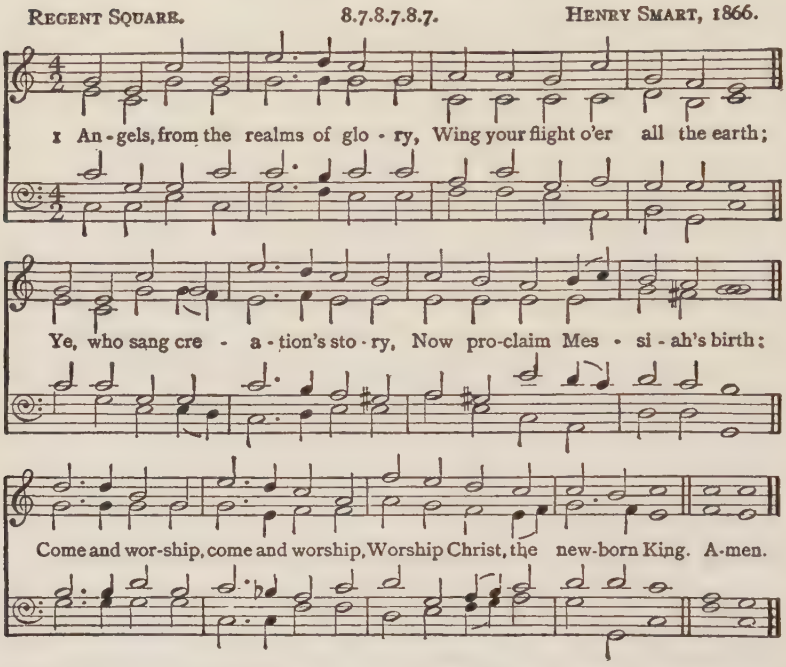
(*Choir sings softly a verse or two of any Christmas hymn, while the reading continues.*)

(ARTHUR *stops before altar, and takes service book, opens, and very slowly, reading as he walks, approaches large chair, at congregation's left, and sits down.*)

From an altar of the chapel, which opened from the great hall, the king took the service book, with reverent hands. He turned the pages until he came to the story of Christmas, blazoned there in color and gold. He moved with slow steps across the hall, reading as he went; sat down, and followed the story to its end. Motionless he lingered there, pondering with quiet eyes. (*Pantomime follows story.*) Then very gradually he closed the book;

he laid it down upon the floor beside him; his head dropped forward on his hand. He slept and dreamed.

(*Organ begins—"Angels from the Realms of Glory."*)


REGENT SQUARE. 8.7.8.7.8.7. HENRY SMART, 1866.
1 An - gels, from the realms of glo - ry, Wing your flight o'er all the earth;
Ye, who sang cre - a - tion's sto - ry, Now pro-claim Mes - si - ah's birth:
Come and wor-ship, come and worship, Worship Christ, the new-born King. A-men.

2 Shepherds in the field abiding,
Watching o'er your flocks by night;
God with man is now residing,
Yonder shines the infant Light:
Come and worship,
Worship Christ, the newborn King.

3 Sages, leave your contemplations;
Brighter visions beam afar:
Seek the great Desire of nations,
Ye have seen His natal star:
Come and worship,
Worship Christ, the newborn King.

4 Saints before the altar bending,
Watching long in hope and fear,
Suddenly the Lord, descending,
In His temple shall appear:
Come and worship,
Worship Christ, the newborn King.

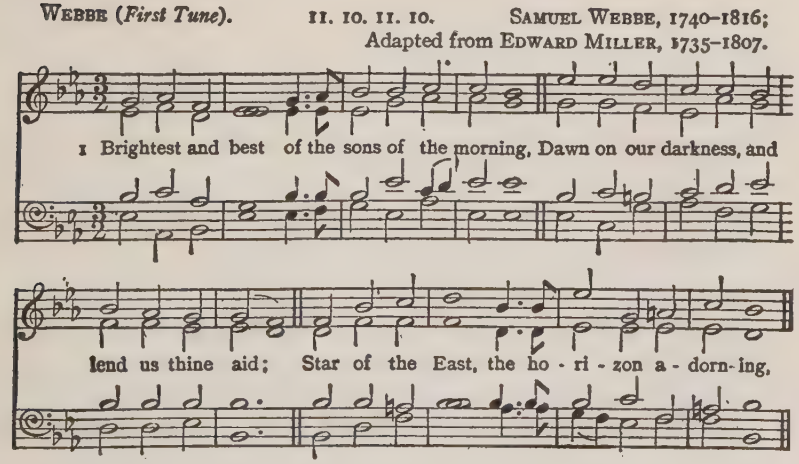
JAMES MONTGOMERY, 1816.

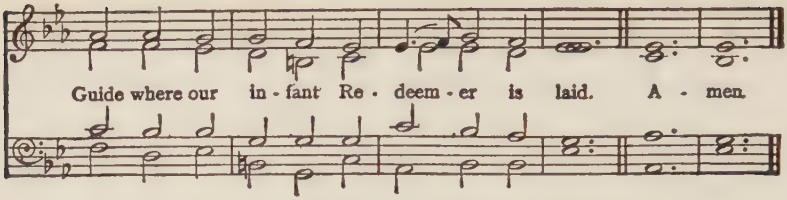
(*Two angels appear from door B, carrying a screen of soft veiling stuff.*)

In a vision he beheld two angels pass before him, and a veil hid what was behind them. (*Tableau as suggested by story.*) Then the veil was lifted and he saw the maiden mother in the stable at Bethlehem, bending over the Christ-child at her breast, while Joseph kept watch at her side. (*Enter shepherds from R, follow action of story.*) With timid step and wondering gaze, two shepherds drew near, and knelt before the mother and the Child, laying rude gifts before them on the ground. (*Organ dies away.*) For a while they knelt in adoration, while the air was filled with heavenly singing. Then they rose, and very reverently went on their way.

(*Exeunt shepherds at B.*)

Still on his throne the king sat motionless, while the vision unfolded before his dreaming eyes. Toward the presence of the mother and Child, three other figures were drawing near. From the distance they came, and the sound of their voices went before them. (*Quartet behind the door at R sings two verses of "Brightest and Best of the Sons of the Morning."*) Very softly they sang together of a quest on which their feet were set. (MAGI *enter at R.*) They were Magi from the East, from the far lands where for centuries men had watched the stars and


WEBBE (*First Tune*). 11. 10. 11. 10. SAMUEL WEBBE, 1740–1816; Adapted from EDWARD MILLER, 1735–1807.
1 Brightest and best of the sons of the morning, Dawn on our darkness, and
lend us thine aid; Star of the East, the ho - ri - zon a - dorn-ing,



2 Cold on His cradle the dew-drops are shining,
Low lies His head with the beasts of the stall;
Angels adore Him in slumber reclining,
Maker and Monarch and Saviour of all.

3 Shall we not yield Him, in costly devotion,
Odours of Edom, and offerings divine,
Gems of the mountain, and pearls of the ocean,
Myrrh from the forest, and gold from the mine?

4 Vainly we offer each ample oblation,
Vainly with gifts would His favour secure;
Richer by far is the heart's adoration,
Dearer to God are the prayers of the poor.

5 Brightest and best of the sons of the morning,
Dawn on our darkness, and lend us thine aid:
Star of the East, the horizon adorning,
Guide where our infant Redeemer is laid.

REGINALD HEBER, 1811.

read in them the message of the thoughts of God. They wore the garments and they walked with the mien of kings. (MAGI *approach the* CHILD *and stand still in awe.*) Yet they, too, like the humble shepherds, paused in awe before the mother and the Child. One by one they knelt and offered the gifts which they were bearing in their hands.

(MELCHIOR *comes forward, kneels, and offers his gift.*)

"O little Child," said Melchior the leader of the Magi, "I bring thee gold as symbol of thy kingship. Yet thou art King in nobler way than any crown of gold can show." (MELCHIOR *rises, and goes left.*)

(GASPAR *comes forward, kneels and offers his gift.*)

Said Gaspar, the second of the Magi, as he knelt, "I bring thee myrrh and frankincense, O thou who by thy sorrows shall be King of all the bruised hearts of men." (*Arises and goes left.*)

(BALTHAZAR *holds cup high, advances, and kneels. An angel takes it from him, as both come forward.*)

Balthazar, the last of the Magi, held in his hands a jeweled cup. As he knelt to offer it, one of the angels stooped and took it from his hands. She held it high. (*Organ begins "Parsifal" music.*)

(*Angel holds the cup high.* MELCHIOR *and* GASPAR *again kneel where they are.*)

"Behold!" the angels said to one another, "from this cup the lips of the Christ-child, grown to be a man, shall drink. From this cup he shall share the wine with his disciples in an upper room that waits beneath the shadow of a cross. And this cup, filled with the wine of his last sacrifice, shall be the Holy Grail. Through all the earth men shall seek for it, and follow on to find it. But none shall ever see it save those who are fit to stand in the Presence of Christ."

(*Exeunt* MAGI *at B.*)

Slowly the Magi rose and went on their way.

(*Follow action of story.*)

On his throne King Arthur stirred. He drew one hand across his brow. It was as though the dream were passing from him, and he must seize it before it went away.

(*Slowly comes toward congregation, one hand upon his breast, the other lifted; his eyes still gazing away.*)

He rose, and with slow steps went forward.

"I have seen the shepherd and the Magi bring their gifts into the presence of the Christ," he said. "Out of my kingdom I would bring a gift that will find favor in his eyes. How may it come to pass that even in our later years we still at Christmas time may stand in the presence of the Christ?"

(*Angels draw curtain before the Holy Family tableau. One angel takes a step toward* ARTHUR.)

Then very gently the angels looked at him, but between him and the Holy Ones they drew the veil. Mary and Joseph and the Child Jesus vanished. (*Sheltered by the veil, they go out at B.*) Then one of the angels spoke.

(ARTHUR *turns and bows his head, his hands crossed on his breast.*)

"In your dream you have beheld what mortal eyes can seldom see. You have asked that from your kingdom there may come a gift which shall make him who brings it worthy to stand in the presence of Christ. Go seek then for the noblest gift which life can bring. When you have found the perfect gift, then shall you see again the Holy Grail. Till then it vanishes, and the Christmas music sounds no more."

(*Follow action of story.*)

Slowly the angels passed from sight.

(*They go out at B.*)

In the midst of the hall King Arthur stood with eyes from which his dreaming lifted like a mist. He raised his head, and a shiver of waking passed through his frame. He flung out his arms and cried aloud: (*Hold tableau of outflung arms, facing congregation, throughout speech.*)

"What I this night have seen, as in a vision, help me, O Lord, with unveiled eyes to see again. Teach me to find the perfect gift for Christ. And when that gift is found, let the token be that we shall see in our midst again the cup of the Holy Grail."

For a moment he knelt before the altar. (*Follow action of story.*) Then presently he rose and went his way.

(*In interval between Scenes I and II, Choir sings hymn, "We Three Kings of Orient Are."*)

SCENE II. *Seats are arranged in shallow semi-circle, facing the congregation.*

READER: In the hall at Camelot, the seats of Arthur's knights were ranged. Among them was the throne of the king himself, but beside it there was a still nobler seat. No knight sat there. It was called the Siege Perilous, and only the perfect knight might dare to claim it for his own. Many a brave and goodly knight belonged to Arthur's court, but never a one who dared to say his knighthood had no fault. For a long, long time the Siege Perilous had stood unoccupied, and many began to think

that it should stand thus till Camelot itself should be no more. The perfect knight did not exist, they said. The Siege Perilous was only the symbol of an empty hope.

(LAUNCELOT *and page enter at B.*)

Into the hall came Launcelot and a page. The greatest of the knights of Arthur led the boy gently by the hand.

(*Rests arm about page's shoulders.*)

"Little lad," he said, "you are ever about the king. Why is his heart so sad?"

(*Follow action of story.*)

The boy pointed to the Siege Perilous.

"I think he grieves," he said, "that still that seat is vacant."

(LAUNCELOT, *too, looks at seat.*)

"Yea, that is an old regret," said Launcelot, "but is that all?"

(*The page, if desired, may pantomime each of the characters.*)

"Not all," the boy replied, "yet all is linked with that. The king is troubled at a dream he had on Christmas Eve. He seemed to see the Christ-child, and the shepherds, and the Wise Men bringing gifts. He saw an angel also who held the Holy Grail. And he heard in his dream that he should never see the Holy Grail again, nor hear the heavenly Christmas music, till out of his kingdom there should come a gift that should be fit for Christ. He hoped that one of his knights might somehow bring it, and that such a knight might fill the empty seat."

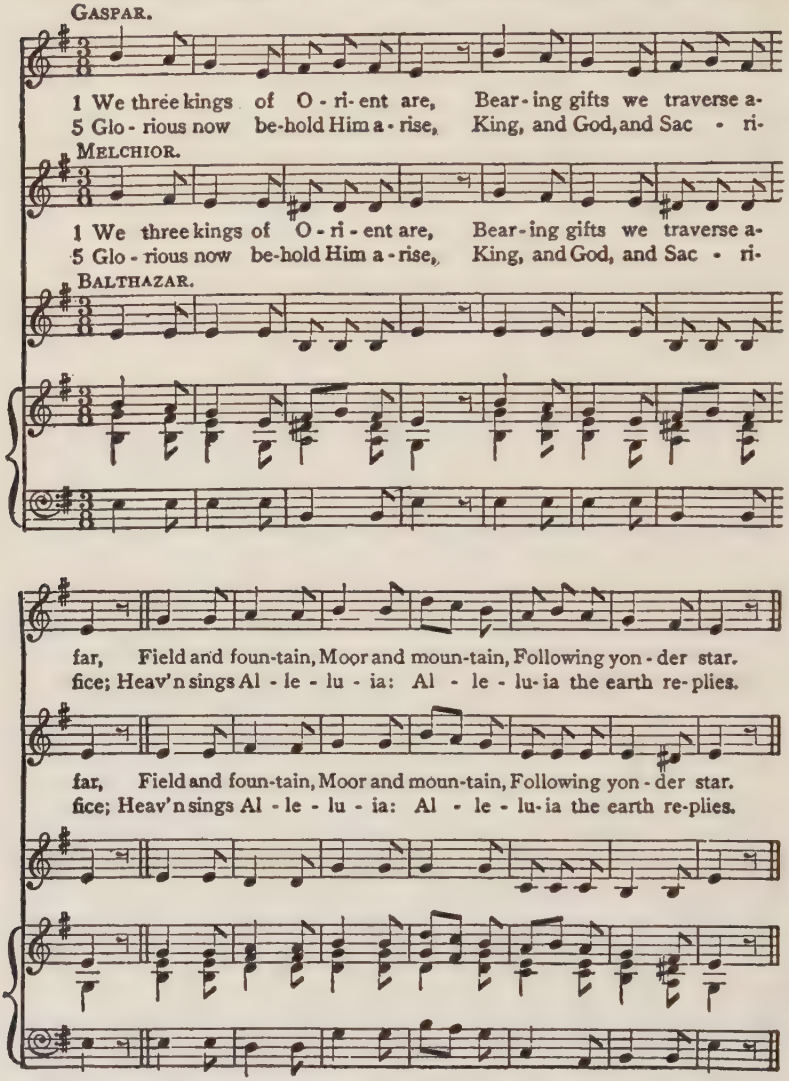
"It may be as you say," said Launcelot (ARTHUR *enters at B*), "but look where Arthur comes!"

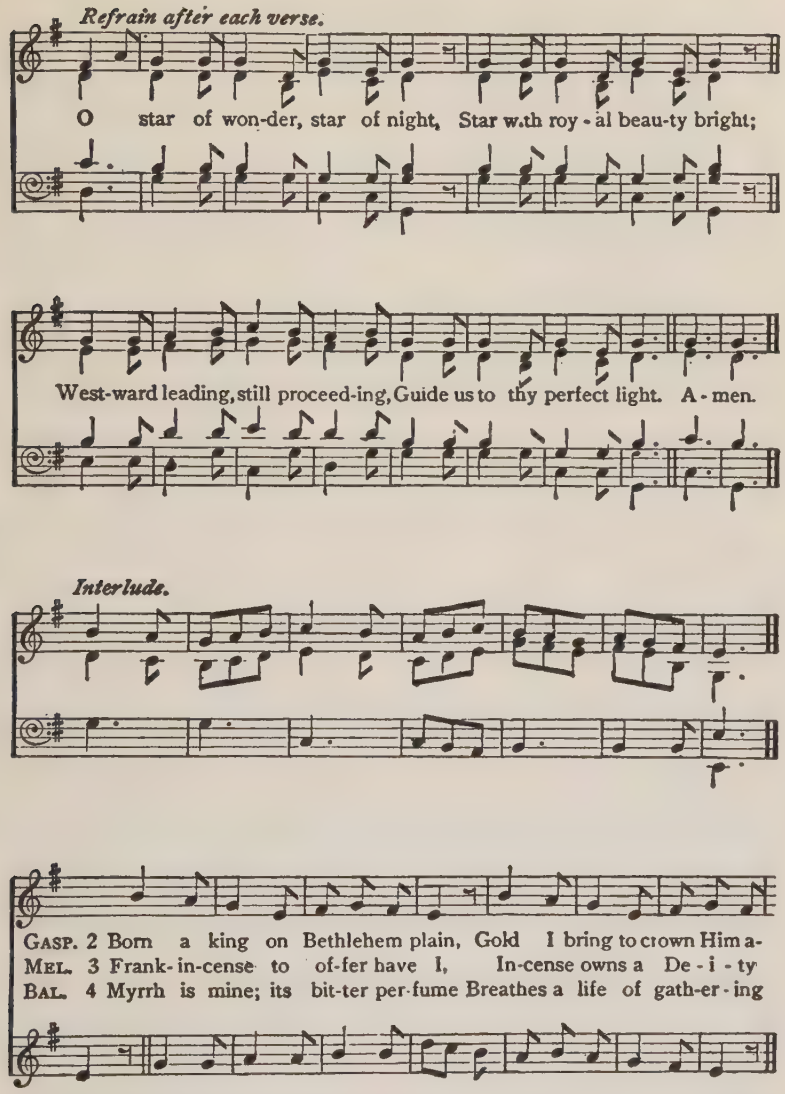
(*Exit page at B.*)

The king appeared in the doorway, and advanced into the hall, while the boy went out. (*Follow action of story.*) He stretched out his hands toward Launcelot, and Launcelot knelt and kissed his hands.

"Kneel not," said Arthur. (*Gestures to* LAUNCELOT *to stand.*) "Rise, for I would counsel with thee. A great desire stirs me,

THREE KINGS OF ORIENT. P.M. JOHN HENRY HOPKINS, JUN., 1857.


GASPAR.
1 We three kings of O - ri - ent are, Bear - ing gifts we traverse a-
5 Glo - rious now be-hold Him a - rise, King, and God, and Sac - ri-
MELCHIOR.
1 We three kings of O - ri - ent are, Bear - ing gifts we traverse a-
5 Glo - rious now be-hold Him a - rise, King, and God, and Sac - ri-
BALTHAZAR.
far, Field and foun-tain, Moor and moun-tain, Following yon - der star.
fice; Heav'n sings Al - le - lu - ia: Al - le - lu - ia the earth re-plies.
far, Field and foun-tain, Moor and moun-tain, Following yon - der star.
fice; Heav'n sings Al - le - lu - ia: Al - le - lu - ia the earth re-plies.


Refrain after each verse.
O star of won-der, star of night, Star with roy-al beau-ty bright;
West-ward leading, still proceed-ing, Guide us to thy perfect light. A-men.
Interlude.
GASP. 2 Born a king on Bethlehem plain, Gold I bring to crown Him a-
MEL. 3 Frank-in-cense to of-fer have I, In-cense owns a De-i-ty
BAL. 4 Myrrh is mine; its bit-ter per-fume Breathes a life of gath-er-ing

gain, King for ev-er, Ceas-ing nev-er O-ver us all to reign.
nigh: Prayer and prais-ing All men rais-ing, Worship Him, God on high.
gloom; Sorrow-ing, sigh-ing, Bleeding, dy-ing, Sealed in the stone-cold tomb.

JOHN HENRY HOPKINS. JUN., 1857.

Verses 2, 3, and 4 should be sung as solos, the accompaniment and refrain being unchanged. Men's voices are preferable for the parts of the three kings.

till it be fulfilled. Ere another Christmas, we must learn the secret that shall bring again the Holy Grail. Out of the kingdom we must find a gift for Christ so great that we shall win His presence here."

"Then bid us go," said Launcelot (LAUNCELOT *stands, and faces king earnestly*), "on that quest. Through all the borders of the kingdom send the knights of Camelot. Perchance some one of us may win the gift that can bring back the Grail."

"So let it be," said Arthur. "Go, call the page."

(ARTHUR *gestures toward door, and slowly walks over to his chair. Follow action of story.*)

Launcelot went to the door and came back in a moment with the boy.

"Summon the knights to come to me," said Arthur.

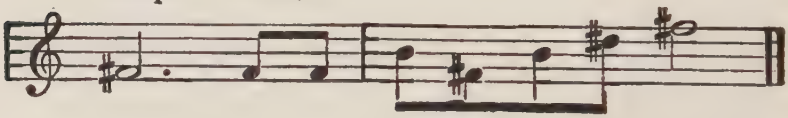
The lad went out and came back presently with a trumpet.

(*Page returns. Remains standing right. Follow action of story.*)

Arthur took his seat upon his throne, and bade Launcelot seat himself upon his left. On his right was the Siege Perilous.

"Sir Bedivere!" the page proclaimed (*organ sounds trumpet notes*), and set the trumpet to his lips and blew to herald him.

Trumpet Theme



(*Enter each of the knights as called. All bow before the king as they enter.*)

Sir Bedivere made his obeisance to the king and took the seat by Launcelot.

Then, one by one, came others, while the trumpet heralded their approach.

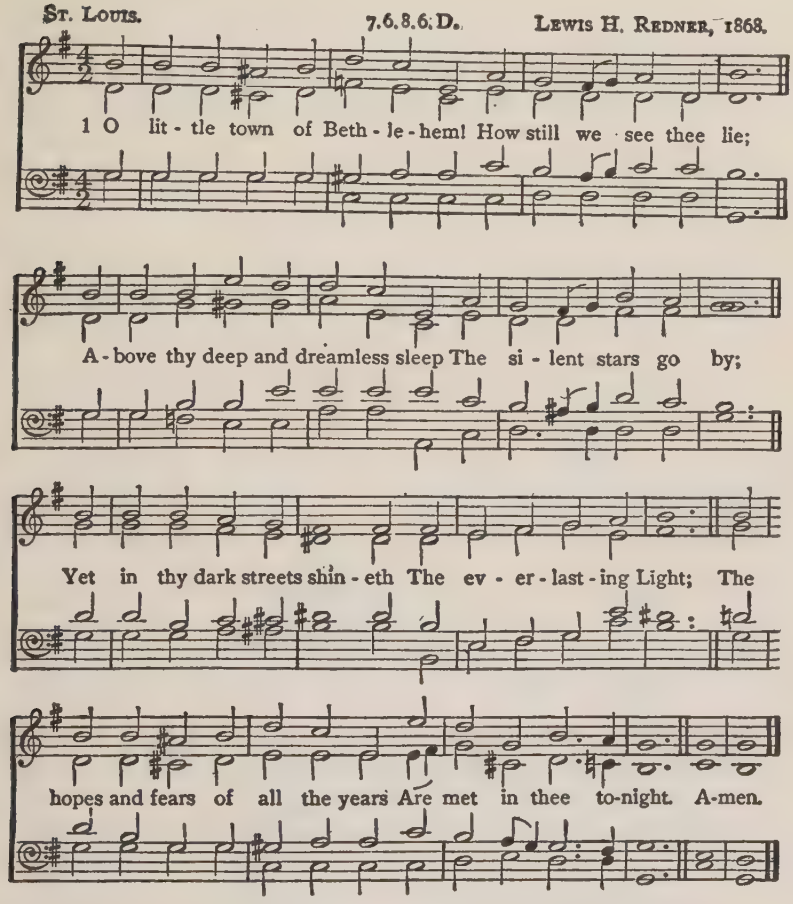
"Sir Gareth!"

"Sir Tristram!"

"Sir Percival!"

"Sir Modred!"

(Organ begins music of "O Little Town of Bethlehem.")


ST. LOUIS.
7.6.8.6.D.
LEWIS H. REDNER, 1868.
1 O lit - tle town of Beth - le - hem! How still we see thee lie;
A - bove thy deep and dreamless sleep The si - lent stars go by;
Yet in thy dark streets shin - eth The ev - er - last - ing Light; The
hopes and fears of all the years Are met in thee to-night. A-men.

2 For Christ is born of Mary;
And gathered all above,
While mortals sleep, the angels keep
Their watch of wondering love.
O morning stars, together
Proclaim the holy birth!
And praises sing to God the King,
And peace to men on earth.

3 How silently, how silently,
The wondrous gift is given!
So God imparts to human hearts
The blessings of His heaven.
No ear may hear His coming,
But in this world of sin,
Where meek souls will receive Him
The dear Christ enters in. [still

4 O holy Child of Bethlehem!
Descend to us, we pray;
Cast out our sin and enter in,
Be born in us to-day.
We hear the Christmas angels
The great glad tidings tell;
O come to us, abide with us,
Our Lord Emmanuel! Amen.

PHILLIPS BROOKS, 1868.

When they were assembled, Arthur spoke. (*All are settled, and listen carefully to the king.*) "Last Christmas Eve," he said, "I saw a vision. I beheld the Christ-child and those who came to bring him gifts. I saw an angel with the Holy Grail. But the Holy Grail shall come no more to Camelot till some great gift of glory shall be brought to Christ. To-day I send you forth on quest to try what you may win."

(*Organ ceases. All stand but* MODRED, *who remains gloomily on his seat.*)

Then up rose all but Modred.

"We shall go," they said. "Give us again thine accolade ere we depart."

(*One by one they kneel before the king, who touches each with his sword.*)

One by one they knelt before the king—Sir Bedivere, Sir Percival, Sir Gareth and Sir Tristram—and he touched them with his sword; one by one they went with strong, swift stride away.

(*Exit each as soon as the king has touched him. Only* LAUNCELOT *and* MODRED *remain.*)

Only Launcelot and Modred were left with Arthur.

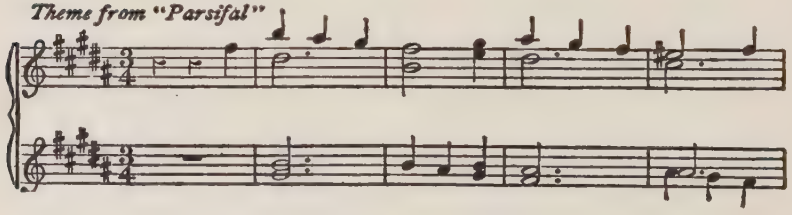
(*Organ begins ominous music.* MODRED *turns to king.*)

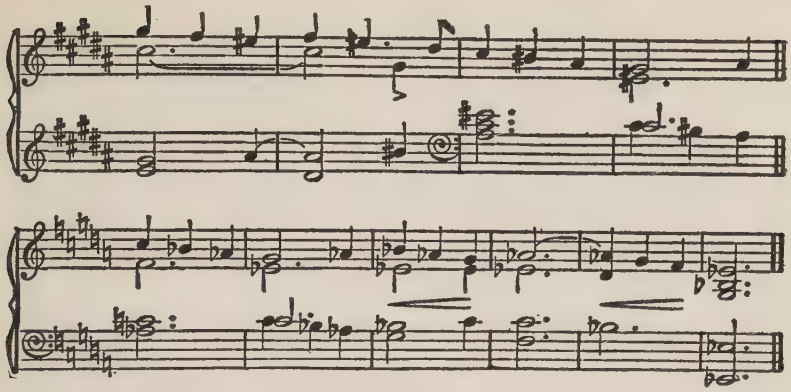
Then slowly Modred spoke.

"I beg you send me forth on no such quest. I cannot chase the fancies of a dream" (*slowly rises and leaves the room*), and sullenly he passed from out the hall.

(LAUNCELOT *watches* MODRED *angrily.*)

(*Organ changes to "Parsifal" theme.*)





But Launcelot rose, with high, stern face.

(*He takes a step after* MODRED, *but stops and faces king eagerly.*)

"We shall not fail," he said. "When Christmas Eve has come again, we shall return to bring thee, by God's grace, thy heart's desire."

He too knelt down before the king, and rose and went away.

(*Follow action of story.*)

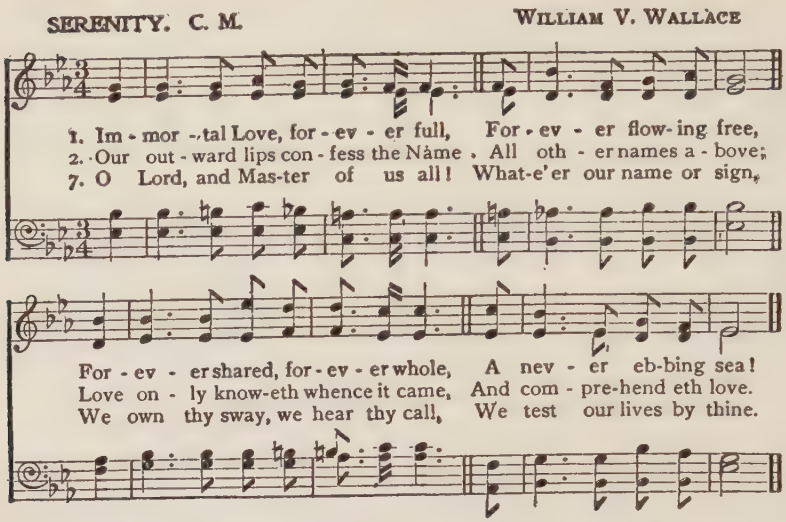
For a moment Arthur sat still upon his throne. Then he went and stood, with lifted face, before the altar, musing within himself.

(*Organ changes to music of "Brightest and Best of the Sons of the Morning."*)

"They go," he said, "as the Magi went of old, upon a distant quest. They follow their gleam as the Magi followed their star. God grant that they, too, shall find the presence of Christ at the end of the way."

(ARTHUR *goes out.*)

(*In interval between Scenes II and III, Choir sings verses 1, 2, and 7 of hymn, "Immortal Love."*)


SERENITY. C. M.
WILLIAM V. WALLACE
1. Im - mor - tal Love, for - ev - er full, For - ev - er flow - ing free,
2. Our out - ward lips con - fess the Name All oth - er names a - bove;
7. O Lord, and Mas-ter of us all! What-e'er our name or sign,
For - ev - er shared, for - ev - er whole, A nev - er eb-bing sea!
Love on - ly know-eth whence it came, And com - pre-hend eth love.
We own thy sway, we hear thy call, We test our lives by thine.

SCENE III. *The Throne placed as in Scene I.*

READER: The months went by, and through all the realm the knights of Arthur, on wide ways of adventuring, sought to win for the king that which might be the gift of his heart's desire. On far and perilous ways they rode. Through many a struggle with the hosts of evil they carved their path. And now as the time drew on toward another Christmas, they turned their faces back to Camelot.

(LAUNCELOT *enters at B.*)

Into the great hall of the castle came Launcelot, the knightliest of them all. In his steps was weariness, but from his eyes there shone the light of one who carried in his heart the secret of a mighty hope. (*Enter* GALAHAD.) After him there came another figure that had not been seen in Camelot before. Younger than Launcelot was this new knight. He wore no armor, and his head was bare. Round his slender, yet stalwart form a scarlet cloak was girded. (*Follow action of story.*) He followed Launcelot into the hall, and stood there silently before the mightier knight.

"Here" (*with sweeping gesture* LAUNCELOT *encircles room, as* GALAHAD *follows it*), said Launcelot, "is the hall of Arthur. Here in this hall the knights of the king are wont to gather at the Table Round. (*Points at altar.*) Yonder at the altar, one by one, they have sworn their fealty to the king, and kept the vigil of their prayer to God for grace and courage, as becomes a knight. (*Places both hands on* GALAHAD'S *shoulders.*) And you, who shall be known henceforth as Galahad, I bring you here that you may keep your vigil. (*Organ begins ominous music.*) The times are evil, and we come in needful hour. (LAUNCELOT *walks restlessly back and forth, stopping occasionally before* GALAHAD *to emphasize what he is saying.*) Since Christmas Day, a twelvemonth since, when I, and Percival, and Bedivere, and others who have loved the king, went forth on quest, bitterness and malice have lifted their heads within the palace. Modred, the false knight, has sought to break the spirit of the fellowship. He laughs at what he calls the dream of Arthur. It is even said that he would see revolt on foot if he but dared. Still he is here within the palace, like a serpent, venomous and secret. Always he has hated me. The very thought of Launcelot is madness to his brain. When he shall hear that I have brought you, he will do you evil if he may. Beware of Modred. Arm yourself against him; but arm you first with panoply of God. (*Brings* GALAHAD *to altar.*) To-night I leave you here before the altar, to keep the maiden vigil of a night." (*Organ changes to a sweeter theme.*)

Then Launcelot went away, and Galahad was left alone.

(*Follow action of story.*)

He knelt before the altar, and stretched forth his hands to pray. He folded them upon his breast, and bowed his head in silent adoration.

(*Organ reverts to ominous music.*)

(MODRED *enters from R. Follow action of story.*)

Then very slowly from the far end of the hall, with steps that kept a stealthy quiet on the floor, came a knight with black cloak

wrapped about his face. He stopped and stared at Galahad, kneeling, all unconscious of his presence. (MODRED *goes out swiftly.*) Then, as noiselessly as he had come, but swiftly, he vanished.

(*Enter R* MODRED *with page. Follow action of story.*)

Presently he came again, leading a page. He gripped the boy evilly by the hand. He pointed to Galahad and whispered a question to the page.

"Who is this newcomer to the Court of Arthur?" he demanded.

(*The boy's wrist is still held in* MODRED'S *grasp.*)

Frightened, the boy made answer to him. "That is Galahad, whom Launcelot has brought. For Launcelot says that this shall be the perfect knight who comes to bring the king the gift of his heart's desire."

Through the form of Modred a sudden shiver of anger ran.

(*Gestures hastily for page to go.*)

"Begone!" he whispered to the boy. "Nor ever say thou sawest me here, or else thy life shall answer for it."

(*Exit page at R.*)

Still before the altar, rapt in his devotion (*follow action of story*), Galahad knelt, unconscious still of what went on behind him.

Modred drew his sword.

"Here shall I end," he said, "the hopes of Launcelot."

(*Follow action of story.*)

He drew closer to Galahad, the sword shortened in his hand.

Slowly the shoulders of Galahad straightened. He had not heard Modred, nor knew that he was near. His lips were moving in the intensity of prayer. He stretched out his arms, and, as he did so, they made the sign of the cross.

Modred saw it, and a dark fear fell upon him.

(*Organ music ends in a sort of shiver of discord.*)

"It is the sign of God!" he said. "I dare not strike him." (MODRED *draws backward; then slowly goes to exit, his eyes on* GALAHAD *as he speaks.*) He recoiled a step, and his eyes roved here and there. Then a new thought seemed to strike him. His face revealed an evil joy.

"It is not needful that I strike him: I shall destroy him in a subtler way. I will tempt him to his fall."

(*Follow action of story.*)

He went out, and Galahad bowed again in the silence of the shrine.

(*Enter from R* MODRED *and three damsels.*)

After a time, came Modred again, and three damsels with him. They were richly clothed, and very fair. In the far corner of the hall, in shadow, where Galahad could not see, Modred waited. (*Follow action of story.*) The three damsels went forward softly toward the kneeling figure. They stood beside him till he knew that they were there.

Reluctantly he rose and faced them.

(*One approaches* GALAHAD.)

"Sir Knight," said one of them, "on Christmas Day you come with Launcelot to appear before the king. It is not well that one should appear before him empty-handed. If you would be great in Camelot, you must come with marks of greatness which the eyes of all can see. Behold, I give you wealth."

She held out to him a golden casket, but Galahad stood still.

(*The second comes nearer* GALAHAD.)

"And I bring you," said the second damsel, "this plume to glorify your helmet. It is the plume of fame."

(*The third comes nearer to* GALAHAD.)

"And I," said the third, "would clothe you with this jeweled robe of pride."

(*Surround him, holding out their gifts.*)

They came nearer with their rich gifts in their hands. But Galahad

drew back, and looked at them. (GALAHAD *shakes his head.*) Slowly he shook his head.

"These gifts," he said, "are not for me. Not thus appareled must I come into the presence of the king."

(*Follow action of story.*)

The damsels stood irresolute. Then they withdrew to where Modred, scowling, met them, and all together they passed from the hall.

(*Organ begins gentle music.* GALAHAD *stands facing altar. Enter fourth maiden. As she speaks,* GALAHAD *turns about and faces her.*)

But Galahad was not left alone. For ere the damsels had retreated, another figure had come into the hall. She had watched them wonderingly as they retreated, and had seen the evil face of Modred meet them. Silently she came forward and stood near Galahad. (*"Parsifal" music.*)

"Sir Knight," she said, "with wisdom have you refused the gifts but now held out to you. Not wealth, nor fame, nor pride will make you ready to satisfy the heart's desire of the king. One thing alone is needful, and that none other than yourself can give. Therefore, I bring you not a gift, but only the token of what you yourself must offer. Upon your robe I put the cross of consecration. Wear it as a symbol of the knightliness you bring."

(*Follow action of story.*)

In her hand she held a cross, cut from white cloth of samite. She fastened it upon the red robe of Galahad.

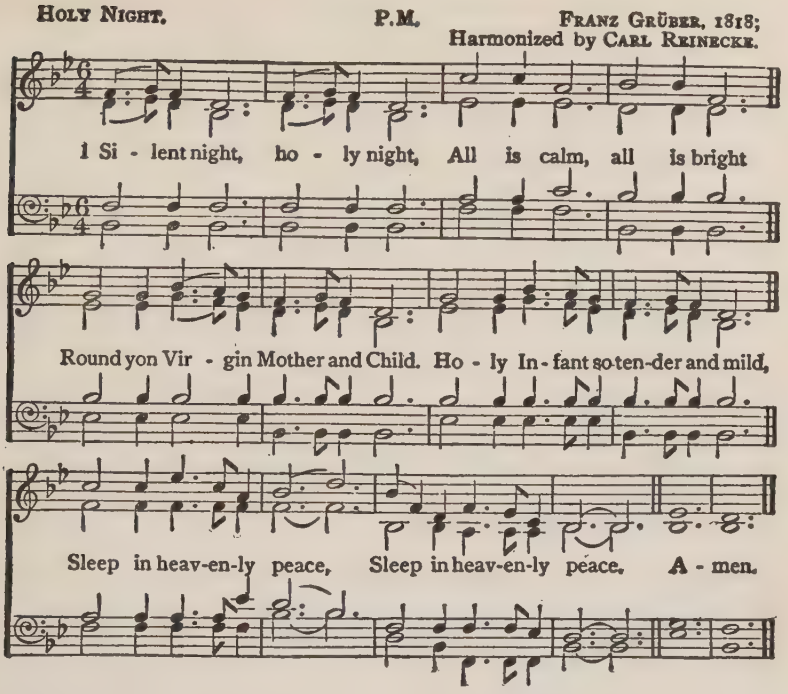
He stood before her, looking far away.

(*Follow action of story.*)

Quietly she went away while Galahad still was motionless. Then he, too, passed through the doorway of the hall.

(*Exit at B.*)

(*Choir sings hymn, "Silent Night, Holy Night," while preparation is being made for Scene IV.*)


HOLY NIGHT.
P.M.
FRANZ GRÜBER, 1818;
Harmonized by CARL REINECKE.
1 Si - lent night, ho - ly night, All is calm, all is bright
Round yon Vir - gin Mother and Child. Ho - ly In - fant so ten-der and mild,
Sleep in heav-en-ly peace, Sleep in heav-en-ly peace. A - men.

2 Silent night, holy night,
Shepherds quake at the sight,
Glories stream from heaven afar,
Heavenly hosts sing alleluia;
Christ, the Saviour, is born!
Christ, the Saviour, is born!

3 Silent night, holy night,
Son of God, love's pure light
Radiant beams from Thy holy face,
With the dawn of redeeming grace,
Jesus, Lord, at Thy birth,
Jesus, Lord, at Thy birth. Amen.

JOSEPH MOHR, 1818.

SCENE IV. *Seats arranged as in Scene II.*

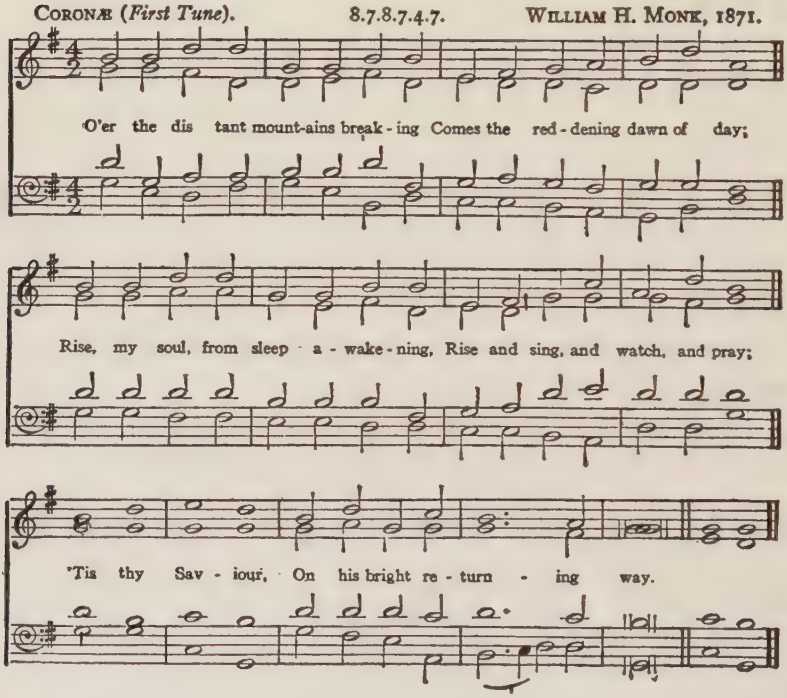
READER: The night of Christmas Eve drew on toward the morning of another Christmas. (*Enter page at B. Follow action of story.*) The day was breaking, as into the hall at Camelot came the little page. He sat down at the foot of Arthur's throne. His head drooped, and presently he fell asleep.

(ARTHUR *enters at B. Follow action of story.*)

From the door came Arthur. He saw the boy and smiled. Quietly he seated himself upon the throne, and looked down upon the

sleeping figure. He laid his hand tenderly upon the boy's hair. (*Holds tableau throughout speech.*)

"To-day, little lad," he said in a low voice that did not wake the child, "to-day we may behold a marvelous thing. Perhaps the gift shall be brought that shall call back the Holy Grail. (*Looks upward.*) If it comes, we shall hear again the heavenly music. If there is only silence, we shall know that the gift has not been found. To-day, this Christmas morn, my knights come back. Look, how through the eastern windows comes the sun. (*Gently shakes the boy.*) Wake, little lad!" (*Choir sings one verse of "O'er the Distant Mountains Breaking."*)


CORONÆ (*First Tune*). 8.7.8.7.4.7. WILLIAM H. MONK, 1871.
O'er the dis tant mount-ains break - ing Comes the red - dening dawn of day;
Rise, my soul, from sleep - a - wake - ning, Rise and sing, and watch, and pray;
'Tis thy Sav - iour, On his bright re - turn - ing way.

The boy, startled from his sleep, looked up, frightened, at the king. (*Follow action of story.*)

"Be not afraid," said Arthur. (*Gestures to boy to go.*) "Go, look from the tower and see whether the knights ride home."

(*Exit page for a moment at B and returns.*)

The boy went out, and in a little while he came again.

"They come," he said. "Even now the first of them has passed the gate."

(ARTHUR *looks toward door.*)

Eagerly King Arthur waited. (BEDIVERE *enters at B.*)

Through the doorway presently came Sir Bedivere. He bore in his hand a cluster of great keys.

(*Bows before king. Then stands and holds forth the keys.*)

"God make thee glad this day, King Arthur!" he exclaimed. "For I have brought these keys of far-off castles I have won for thee, to do with as thou wilt."

"Welcome, Sir Bedivere," said Arthur. "And well I know the prowess thou hast shown. Lay down thy gift before the altar."

(BEDIVERE *kneels before the altar and lays down his gift, then comes slowly to his seat.*)

Sir Bedivere laid down the keys; and there was silence.

He took his seat with disappointed face.

(*Enter* SIR TRISTRAM. *Same action as before.*)

In came Sir Tristram. In his hand he carried a cluster of lances.

"These, O King," he said, "are the weapons of thine enemies whom I have overthrown."

And the king answered, "Valiant is thy spirit, Tristram. Lay down thy gift before the shrine of God."

(*Follow action of story.*)

Tristram laid down the lances. But again the hall was silent, nor came there any heavenly sign.

Tristram took his seat.

(*Enter* SIR GARETH.)

Next came Sir Gareth. He carried in his hand a flag.

(*Same action as before.*)

"This flag," he said, "is symbol of kingship over spacious realms. There, by my conquest, thou mayest reign."

"Thy valor, too, is noble," Arthur said. "Lay down the banner in the sight of God."

(*Follow action of story.*)

Gareth placed it by the lances and the keys. But no sound broke the silence of the hall, nor came there any shining of the Grail.

Gareth took his seat.

(*Enter* PERCIVAL.)

Next after him came Percival. He brought a gleaming sword.

(*Same action as before.*)

"My Lord, the king," he said, "I took this sword from a far island in enchanted seas. Who carries it shall triumph everywhere. Take this, and all the earth is thine—yea, thine to give to God."

(*Follow action of story.*)

Arthur's eyes brightened. He rose from his throne. "Lay it before the altar," he said. "Let us see whether the Grail will come."

Percival laid down the sword. Then waited they all, and watched, and listened, but there came no sight nor sound.

Arthur sat down wearily upon his throne. "Only Launcelot is left," he said.

(*Enter* LAUNCELOT.)

Then last came Launcelot.

"O best beloved of all the knights of Camelot," said Arthur, "what hast thou brought?"

(*Follow action of story.*)

"I come," said Launcelot, "with empty hands. For no gifts we ourselves have wrought or won can gain for thee the Holy Grail. The dust of earthiness, the scars of sin, are on us all. One gift alone can bring the Holy Grail. It is the gift of a new man-

hood in our fellowship. It is the presence of a nobler knighthood, white, unstained and true."

(*Follow action of story.*)

Back to the door he went, and came again, leading Galahad.

(*Organ begins "Parsifal" music.*)

"Lo, here," he said, "is the virgin valor of the pure in heart. Here is the gift of the soul of man made fair for Christ."

Through the great spaces of the hall, there woke the sound of music. Sweet and faint and far away it seemed at first, and then it rose and surged into tumultuous splendor, like an ocean, throbbing upon an echoing shore. (*Entering from B two angels holding high the Holy Grail. Follow action of story.*) Then suddenly the hall was bright with an unearthly radiance, for into the presence of Arthur two angels came, and in their hands they bore the Holy Grail.

From their seats the knights leaped to their feet, and stood still and awestruck. Galahad fell upon his knees.

But the angels went and stood one on either side of the Siege Perilous, and over it they held the Grail.

(*Follow action of story.*)

Launcelot went forward slowly and touched Galahad upon the shoulder. He bade him rise. Then, very reverently, he led him toward the Siege Perilous, and seated him there.

(*Hold tableau.*)

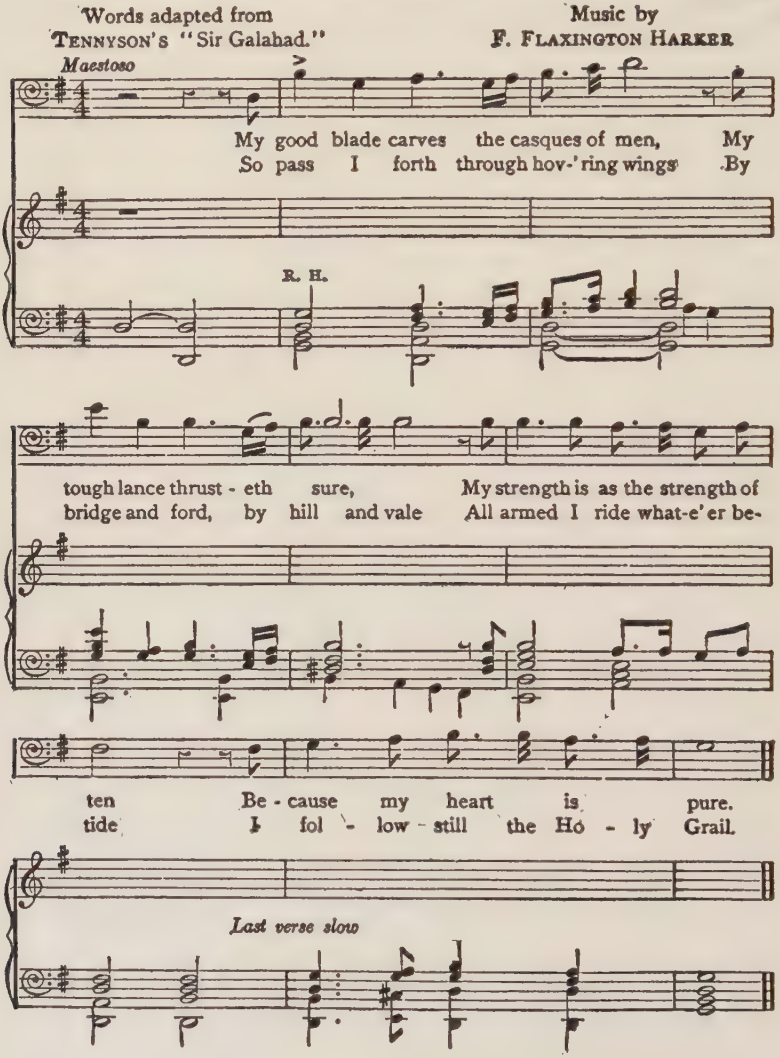
The angels spoke, one to another.

"From the Siege Perilous," they said, "the life that brings its gift to God must go on ways of mighty service. Out on the road of human need it must adventure, offering there to the least of these, His brethren, the beauty of the gift it brings to Christ."

(*Follow action of story.*)

On either side of the Siege Perilous they remained for a moment, lifting up the Holy Grail. Then, with the Grail held high between them (*exeunt down center aisle of church according to*

reading), they passed from Camelot. From the Siege Perilous Galahad rose and followed them, and, after him, at a little distance, went Launcelot and the other knights of Arthur. The king himself stood motionless before his throne; and as he listened, there floated back the voice of Galahad as he sang—


Words adapted from
TENNYSON'S "Sir Galahad."
Music by
F. FLAXINGTON HARKER
Maestoso
My good blade carves the casques of men, My
So pass I forth through hov-'ring wings By
R. H.
tough lance thrust - eth sure, My strength is as the strength of
bridge and ford, by hill and vale All armed I ride what-e'er be-
ten Be - cause my heart is pure.
tide I fol - low - still the Ho - ly Grail.
Last verse slow

(*After the angels,* GALAHAD, LAUNCELOT, *and the other knights have passed down the middle aisle, when the song of* GALAHAD—*sung outside by a voice from the choir—has ended,* ARTHUR *turns and with the page goes out through the chancel door. Then the choir and all the congregation rise and sing the hymn "Brightest and Best of the Sons of the Morning."*)

CURTAIN

AMERICA'S UNFINISHED BATTLES*

A PAGEANT

BY

FRED EASTMAN

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ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The author desires to express his indebtedness to the Drama League of America in general and to Dr. Linwood Taft in particular for the coöperation of constructive criticism and suggestion in the creation of this pageant; also to Mr. Hugh Porter for selecting the music.

THE AIM OF THIS PAGEANT

It is intended that *America's Unfinished Battles* shall arouse the audience to:

First: A legitimate pride in the history of this country and especially in the spiritual heritage our fathers bequeathed to us: their ideals of freedom, brotherhood, and service.

Second: A recognition of the fact that America is changing. The old Anglo-Saxon element which once dominated has been becoming a smaller and smaller percentage of our total population, and its ideals are in danger of being supplanted.

Third: The challenge to service presented by the millions of people in America who for the most part have not had an equal chance for "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." These millions include some 14,000,000 foreign-born; 12,000,000 Negroes; 3,800,000 Latin Americans; 1,750,000 Mexicans in the Southwest; 5,500,000 Southern Mountaineers; 1,500,000 migrant laborers; 54,000 Alaskans; 340,000 Indians. Helping these millions to secure the necessities of life and the blessings of America is a tremendous task that confronts our generation, and must be accomplished by us if we are to be worthy sons of worthy sires.

OF THE PAGEANT IN GENERAL

America's Unfinished Battles consists of four episodes.

The time required for the production is about an hour and a half.

The action, for the most part, is accompanied by music—instrumental in some cases, choral in others.

There are three speaking parts, "America," "Patriotism," and "Service." "America" acts as judge or arbiter; "Patriotism" glories in America's past and is inclined to be content with that past and blind to present needs. "Service" is sensitive to the needs of those who have not had the blessings of this country, but have seen only its hardships.

The pageant is so planned that it may be given with a large, a medium, or a small cast.

The *Large Cast* will include 150 or more people. Of these there are approximately:

Men	52
Women	48
Boys and Girls	50
Total	150

The *Medium Cast* will include 85 or more people. Of these there are approximately:

Men	34
Women	32
Boys and Girls	19
Total	85

The *Small Cast* will include 60 people. Of these there are approximately:

Men	22
Women	25
Boys and Girls	13
Total	60

These casts are made up as follows:

	Small Cast	Medium Cast	Large Cast
America	1	1	1
Patriotism	1	1	1
Service	1	1	1
Trumpeters	4	4	4
Pilgrims	2	3	6
Pioneers	2	3	6
Men of 1776	3	3	3
Winners of Religious Freedom	2	3	5
Men of 1812	2	2	3
Louisiana Purchase, 1803	1	1	2
Florida, 1819	1	1	2
Texas, 1845	1	1	2
Oregon, 1846	1	1	2
California, 1848	1	1	2
Alaska	1	1	2
Philippines, Hawaii, Porto Rico, Virgin Islands	2	2	4
Freedmen	2	3	6
Suffragists	2	2	4
Leaders of Trade	2	2	6
Immigrants	3	7	10
Negroes	2	4	6
Southern Mountaineers	2	3	6
Latin Americans	2	3	6
Mexicans	2	3	6
Lumberjacks	1	2	4
Alaskans (natives)	2	3	4
Indians	2	3	4
Children	2	5	12 or more
Doctors and Nurses	2	4	6
School Teachers	2	4	6
Church Workers	2	4	6
Choir	4	4	12 or more
Total	60	85	150

EPISODES

Episode I: America's Victories of Yesterday

1. The Coming of the Pilgrims
2. Conquering the Land.
3. Winning Freedom from England
4. Winning Religious Freedom
5. Winning Freedom of the Seas
6. Expanding—Louisiana Purchase, Florida, Texas, Oregon, California, Alaska, The Philippines, Hawaii, Porto Rico, the Virgin Islands.
7. The Emancipation of the Slaves
8. Woman Suffrage
9. Conquest of World Trade

Episode II: Unfinished Battles

Securing the Blessings of America for:

1. The Foreign-born
2. The Negroes
3. The Southern Mountaineers
4. The Latin-Americans
5. The Mexicans in the United States
6. The Migrant Laborers
7. The Alaskans
8. The Indians
9. The Children

Episode III: The Call for Volunteers

The Response of

1. The Doctors and Nurses
2. The Schools
3. The Churches

Episode IV: America the Beautiful—A Vision of the Future

CHARACTERS

AMERICA: *a tall, well-developed young woman.*

PATRIOTISM: *a well-developed young woman; a brunette, preferably; a trifle shorter than America.*

SERVICE: *a young woman about the same height as Patriotism; a blond, preferably.*

TRUMPETERS: *four little boys of about the same height—or two somewhat taller than the other two.*

Introduced by Patriotism

PILGRIMS: *men, women, and children*
PIONEERS: *same as Pilgrims*
MEN OF 1776: *three men*
WINNERS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM: *men*
MEN OF 1812: *two or three men*
FLORIDA, 1819: *young men*
LOUISIANA PURCHASE, 1803: *young women*
TEXAS, 1845: *young men*
OREGON, 1846: *young women*
CALIFORNIA, 1848: *young women*
ALASKA: *young men*
PHILIPPINES: *young women*
HAWAII: *young women*
PORTO RICO: *young women*
VIRGIN ISLANDS: *young women*
FREEDMEN: *men, women, and children*
SUFFRAGISTS: *women*
LEADERS OF TRADE: *men*

Introduced by Service

IMMIGRANTS: *men, women, and children*
NEGROES: *men, women, and children*
SOUTHERN MOUNTAINEERS: *men, women, and children*
LATIN AMERICANS: *young women*
MEXICANS: *young men*
LUMBERJACKS: *young men*
ALASKANS: *men or women*
INDIANS: *men or women*
CHILDREN OF AMERICA: *boys and girls*
DOCTORS AND NURSES: *men and women*
SCHOOL TEACHERS: *men and women*
CHURCH WORKERS: *men and women*

CHOIR: *men and women*

COSTUMES

America: A Columbia costume of silver cloth or white silk material with silver bands and cord. American flag (taffeta) draped from right shoulder. Cap—helmet style—of silvery material with laurel leaves at front.

Patriotism: Costume made in fashion similar to that of America's, but of red silk—the shade of the red in the flag—with silver bands and cord. Silver band on head.

Service: Same as Patriotism's, but of blue, the shade of the blue in the flag.

Trumpeters: Four small pages in black and white costumes: black bloomers, black capes lined with white, black hats with white tam-o'-shanter crowns and triangular pieces of black coming up from brim, and white or black ostrich plumes. Trumpets may be made of ordinary tin horns lengthened by pasteboard shaped like trumpets, and the whole gilded.

Pilgrims: Women: Gowns of bluish-gray cambric with white kerchiefs, wristbands, and caps. Men: Steeple-crown hats, short breeches, buckled shoes, broad white collar on coat of period. See picture of Pilgrims going to church, also *Costumes and Scenery for Amateurs,** pages 44, 46, 47, 135, 136.

Pioneers: Men wear "Davy Crockett" cap (coon skin with tail in back), fringed buckskin breeches (leather-colored canton flannel), carry long hunting rifles or axes. For women and children, see pictures of Connecticut historical pageant in *American Pageantry,*† pages 96 and 109.

Men of 1776: Fifer, drummer, and standard-bearer. See picture "Spirit of '76"—*American Pageantry,* pages 114, 120.

* By Constance D'Arcy Mackay. Henry Holt and Co., New York. $1.75.
† Handbook of American Pageantry. By Ralph Davol. Davol Publishing Co., Taunton, Mass. $2.50.

WINNERS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM:
Quaker: Broad-brimmed hat, dun-colored clothes.
Puritan: Same as Pilgrims.
Colonial Person: See *American Pageantry,* page 52.

MEN OF 1812: Naval costumes of the period.

LOUISIANA PURCHASE, 1803: Dress of period made of old rose silky material. See directions in *Costumes and Scenery for Amateurs,* pages 52 and 168. Carry stalks of cotton as symbolic of resources. Grain may be used.

FLORIDA, 1819: Man in doublet, cloak, and long hose such as were worn by the Spaniards who settled Florida. See *Costumes and Scenery for Amateurs,* page 122. Carry oranges, dates, etc.

TEXAS, 1845: Cowboy costume.

OREGON, 1846: Light green costume that blends in tone with the other costumes in group. Or use sprigged material common at that time. See *American Pageantry,* page 150. Wear a wreath of spruce on hair, and carry Oregon apples on wooden fruit dish.

CALIFORNIA, 1848: Yellow costume—yellow cheese-cloth with stiff, tight waist, full (hoop) skirt about like that of Oregon, black ribbons on wrists—everything to suggest brightness, etc. Find pictures at public library. Carry basket of fruit.

ALASKA: Prospector, carrying pick and gold pan, and a pack on his back.

PHILIPPINES: Lavender costume of thin material, stiff like organdy. High, wired collar, big sleeves, full skirt, black silk apron. If a man is chosen, he should wear white duck suit and cork helmet.

HAWAII: Typical costume of brown cambric with overdress of crêpe paper of lighter brown cut in strips. Light tan hose without shoes. The coral colored necklace worn by Hawaiians may be made of crêpe paper.

PORTO RICO: White skirt and waist, black hair combed straight back. Styles about like ours of several years ago.

VIRGIN ISLANDS: Same as Porto Rico.

FREEDMEN: For mammy, see picture "Aunt Jemima's Pancake Flour." For southern butler, see *American Pageantry,* page 150. Field slaves: old clothes, and carry big hats. Pickaninnies may wear any sort of old tattered clothes.

SUFFRAGISTS: Tailored suits or street dresses. Tailored hats.

LEADERS OF TRADE: Modern business suits.

Missionary magazines and reports have pictures of nearly all those groups called by "Service." Secure a picture for each group, and let those who take the part get ideas from it. Better acting will result.

IMMIGRANTS: Full skirts, scarfs on heads, shawls, bundles. Children with hair looking uncombed or "skinned back," no hair ribbons. Or, native costumes of Italy, Hungary, Russia, etc.

NEGROES: Best to get real ones, if possible. If made up, *use burnt cork,* but do not make them too black or shiny. Avoid anything that suggests the Negro of comedy. Copy Negro workman as seen on street car, the Negro laundress, and Negro children in schools.

SOUTHERN MOUNTAINEERS: Man's clothes "hang" on him. They are unpressed, but not noticeably dirty. He may carry a rifle. Woman's skirt is long—rather drags. It may be of cotton or any slimsy material. She should wear a sunbonnet. Children should be barefooted, and their hair should be untidy.

LATIN AMERICANS: Skirt of a bright color, black satin bodice, earrings, and black lace scarf arranged in Spanish style.

MEXICANS: Sombrero, corduroy trousers, brown shirt, pick and shovel.

LUMBERJACKS: Heavy khaki shirt open at throat; or black and red shirt or mackinaw, corduroy trousers, high boots, old soft hat. They should carry axes.

ALASKANS: Eskimo Indians wear fur *parkas.* A *parka* is a fur coat with hood attached made to slip over the head like a middy. For

the women the *parkas* are long, for the men they are hip-length, with knee trousers of fur or some heavy material. Mukluks, Eskimo shoes, possibly may be borrowed from a local museum. If not, heavy boots or shoes may be worn. See *A Winter Circuit of the Arctic Coast,** pages 222, 232, 310, etc.

INDIANS: Characteristic Indian dress, taking care not to mix the different tribal costumes. See any illustrated dictionary.

CHILDREN: Simple white dresses for girls. Boys wear plain suits. Make this a very attractive and appealing group.

DOCTORS AND NURSES: Surgical coats and uniforms and caps.

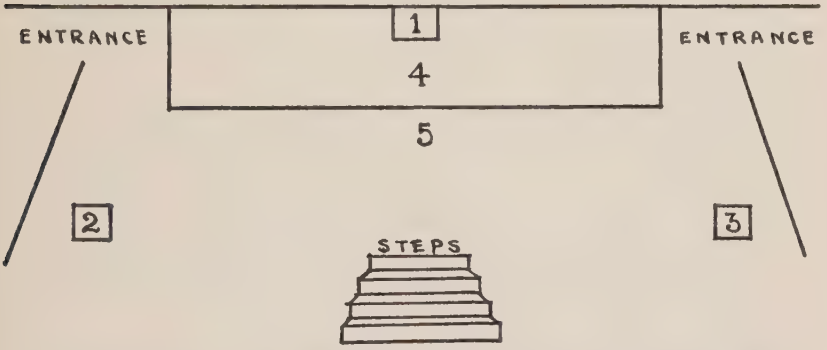
SCHOOL TEACHERS: Academic gowns and mortar-board caps.

CHURCH WORKERS: Geneva gowns.

* By Hudson Stuck. Published by Scribner's Sons, New York. Price, $6.00.

THE STAGE

For the large cast the stage should be about 35 feet wide and 16 to 18 feet deep. For the smaller casts the stage should be correspondingly reduced. It should contain two slight elevations; one covering the rear third of the stage; the other a small one, just large enough for America's station on throne. See diagram below.



1—For America. 2—For Patriotism. 3—For Service. 4—For Characters called by Patriotism. 5—For Characters called by Service.

MUSIC

The choir, soloists and instrumentalists (with the exception of the "Men of 1776") are all off stage. They should be hidden from the audience if possible.

All selections not otherwise specified are for the organ.

As much variety as possible should be used in the presentation of the music. For this reason a violin and guitar (or ukulele) will aid very much. However, if necessary, all numbers may be given by the organist and singers.

The following music should be secured for the pageant:

(1) *Pomp and Circumstance.* Military March. By Elgar. Arranged for the organ by Edwin H. Lemare. Published by Boosey and Co., New York. Price, 67 cents.

(2) *Hymnal for American Youth.* Compiled by H. Augustine Smith. Published by The Century Company, New York. Price, 75 cents.

(3) *Patriotic and Folk-lore Songs.* Published by Rand, McNally Company, Chicago. Price, 25 cents.

(4) *The American Patrol.* By F. W. Meacham. Published by Morris Publishing Company, Philadelphia. Price, 40 cents.

(5) *Marche Militaire.* By Schubert. Arranged by Sartorio. Published by Theodore Presser, Philadelphia. Price, 30 cents.

"Hail Columbia" may be substituted for this.

(6) *Hawaiian Collection of Songs.* Sherman Clay of San Francisco, Distributor.

(7) *Three Negro Spirituals.* Arranged for the organ by James R. Gillette. Published by J. Fischer and Bro., New York. Price, 75 cents.

(8) *Land of Hope and Glory.* By Elgar. Published by Boosey and Co., New York. Price, 40 cents.

(9) *Hymn of Glory.* By Pietro A. Yon. Published by J. Fischer and Bro., New York. Price, $1.25. For this may be substituted *Concert Variations on the Star-spangled Banner.* By Dudley Buck. Published by Schirmer, New York. Price, 50 cents.

(10) *Folk Songs from Mexico and South America.* Published by H. W. Gray Company, New York. Price, $1.00.

(11) *Woodland Sketches.* By MacDowell. Published by Schmidt & Company. Price, $1.25.

MUSICAL PROGRAM

Arranged in the order in which the music occurs throughout the pageant. Numbers in parentheses correspond with numbers on list of music to be secured.

(1) Pomp and Circumstance. *Or* (2) Hymn: "God of Our Fathers." No. 245.
(2) Hymn: "O God, Beneath Thy Guiding Hand." No. 249.
(3) "Keller's American Hymn." (Third stanza.)
(4) The American Patrol.
(2) Hymn: "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God." No. 181.
(5) Marche Militaire. (Two stanzas of "Hail Columbia" may be substituted for this.)
(2) Hymn: "O King of Kings." No. 234.
(6) "Wai o Punalau" or "Aloha."
(7) "Nobody Knows the Trouble I've Seen."
(8) Land of Hope and Glory. (Chorus only.)
(2) Hymn: "God Send Us Men." No. 220. (Fourth stanza.)
(9) Hymn of Glory. *Or* Variations on the Star-spangled Banner.
(2) Hymn: "God Save America." No. 238.
(7) "Deep River."
(2) Hymn: "Lord, While for All Mankind We Pray." No. 243. (Stanzas one and three.)
(10) "Perguntale a las Estrellas."
(10) "Encantadora Maria."
(2) Hymn: "Lord, While for All Mankind We Pray." No. 243. (Stanzas one and two.)
(3) "Dear Land of My Fathers." (First stanza only.)
(11) "From an Indian Lodge."
(2) Hymn: "Hark to the Sound." No. 249.
(2) Hymn: "O Beautiful for Spacious Skies." No. 239.

AMERICA'S UNFINISHED BATTLES

Episode I

America's victories of yesterday

The audience is seated. The lights of the church are dimmed, except the stage, which is bright. The organ plays as a processional, either of the following, the latter being an easier selection to play than the former:

(1) "Pomp and Circumstance." Play through page 5, line 4, measure 2. Then repeat trumpet fanfare at top of page 5, playing it on D natural instead of D sharp and E flat.*

(2) Hymn: "God of Our Fathers, Whose Almighty Hand" (245). (Trumpet fanfare will be found at opening of hymn.) Down the center aisle march America *and the trumpeters, her attendants. They ascend the steps, and at the front of the stage the trumpeters sound a fanfare. As the notes die away,* America, *standing between the trumpeters, addresses the audience.*

America: Hear ye, Citizens: I, America, have called you hither that you may help me decide a matter of importance to your destiny. In the mystic realm of men's hearts where dwell the spirits that control the lives of nations a contest has been waging. Two of my handmaidens, Patriotism and Service, who from my childhood have walked hand in hand and watched over me with loving care, have now quarreled. Patriotism feels that she no longer needs the help of Service, but is able to guide my steps in this generation without her counsel. Much they have contended in words, until, wearied of their arguments, I have summoned them here to present their pleas before you. Attend, I pray you, in

* For sources for all music mentioned throughout pageant see pages 306-7. Also see Musical program, page 308.

reverence and prayer, and help me to decide whose counsel I am to follow. You and I must make no mistake. The happiness of our children and the well-being of the whole world depend upon us. Trumpeters, summon Patriotism and Service.

(*The Trumpeters sound a call and* PATRIOTISM *appears at the right of the stage and* SERVICE *at the left. They advance and kneel before* AMERICA, *who is standing at the foot of the steps to the throne. The same trumpet call as above or any other simple one may be used.*)

AMERICA (*taking each by the hand*): Arise, Patriotism and Service. Patriotism, stand there (*indicating station at right of stage and at front*). Service, stand there (*indicating station at left of stage and at front*). I will sit here upon this seat of judgment. I am troubled, O Patriotism and Service, that there has arisen this discord between you. For together you have been my comrades since my birth. Together we were all baptised in blood. Together we have followed my sons from the Atlantic to the Pacific. Together we have established this nation. But now thou, O Patriotism, art contending that we need no longer walk together, and that thy wisdom is sufficient to guide the destinies of my people. State, then, thine arguments here before us all.

PATRIOTISM: O America, thou dost well to listen to me. Thou shalt see that there is reason in mine arguments. I know thee. I have watched thee grow in strength and in power year by year. I know thy young might as no one else knoweth it. I know the price thou hast paid for it. These things have I told thee often enough, but thou wilt not know them as I know them until thou hast seen them with thine own eyes. So thou shalt see them. Summon from thy past those who have made thee what thou art. Bid them stand before thee, and thou shalt see thy strength, and glory in it. Then shalt thou hear my plea.

AMERICA: Whom shall I call?

PATRIOTISM: Call first the Pilgrims.

AMERICA (*calling*): The Pilgrims!

(*Enter from the right a company of Pilgrims, walking slowly, and carrying each his Bible. As they approach and kneel at* AMERICA'S *feet, the Pilgrims, or the choir off-stage, or both, sing: Hymn: "O God, Beneath Thy Guiding Hand" (249). The Pilgrims, rising, take positions near* AMERICA *and occupy these positions until the final episode. This procedure shall be followed by the other groups called by* PATRIOTISM.)

PATRIOTISM: Call next the sons of the Pilgrims, the Pioneers, who cleared the forests, fought the Indians, and endured untold hardships in building homes, founding schools and churches, and in establishing the Colonies.

AMERICA (*calling*): The Pioneers!

(*Enter from the right a company of Pioneers, with axes and guns. As they appear and come forward to do obeisance to* AMERICA, *the choir off-stage sings the third stanza of "Keller's American Hymn."*)

PATRIOTISM: Call the men of 1776! They who fought at Lexington and Bunker Hill, Yorktown and Valley Forge.

AMERICA (*calling*): The Men of 1776!

(*Enter from the right three Continental soldiers: fifer, drummer and standard bearer as in the picture "The Spirit of '76." Their music, "The American Patrol," is heard for some moments before they appear. The drummer plays the opening strains before appearing. If desired, he may then omit intervening bars and begin anew at the drum call in the middle of the selection, increasing from a pianissimo to a fortissimo as the three men enter. The fifer enters immediately after the drum call, the two playing together the strains of "Yankee Doodle" as found in the selection. If the fife and drum cannot produce this music, the organ should be used for it.*)

(*The flag bearer silently presents his flag to* AMERICA.

She receives it with restrained feeling and commits it to the two attendants on her right who hold it near her throughout the pageant.)

PATRIOTISM: Call those devoted men of God who won for us our Religious Freedom.

AMERICA (*calling*): Winners of our Religious Freedom!

(*To the hymn, "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God" (181), sung by the leaders, or by the choir, or by both, there enters from right a procession of leaders of the early American Church. Their leader carries the Christian flag and silently gives it to* AMERICA. *She receives it reverently and hands it to the attendants on her left, who hold it near her (balancing the position of the American flag on the right) throughout the pageant.*)

PATRIOTISM: Call those who in 1812 cemented our independence and established for us the freedom of the seas.

AMERICA (*calling*): The Men of 1812!

(*A small company of sailors enters from the right to martial music played by the organ. This may be either "Marche Militaire" or two stanzas of "Hail Columbia."*)

PATRIOTISM: These were the men who founded our nation, America, and their children were possessed of the same heroic and dauntless spirit. Westward they pushed, adding vast new lands, until from the Atlantic to the Pacific they had set the stamp of their ideals and their characters. Call these territories which they added to the original colonies, and see what resources and what strength they brought—the Louisiana Purchase, Florida, Oregon, California, Texas, and Alaska.

AMERICA (*calling*): Come, ye children of the West!

(*To hymn, "O King of Kings!" (234) sung by choir, there enter, in series, companies representing these ter-*

ritories. They bow before AMERICA *and take positions near her.*)

PATRIOTISM: The Islands of the Seas have looked with longing eyes to thee, America, and the Philippines, Hawaii, Porto Rico, and the Virgin Islands have been glad to find refuge and protection under thy flag.

AMERICA (*calling*): The Islands of the Seas!

(*Enter companies of Filipinos, Hawaiians, Porto Ricans, etc. Each in turn bows before* AMERICA *and then makes its way to a position with the other groups around her. The music accompanying this entrance may be "Wai o Punalau" or "Aloha." If possible, have the melody played by violin or mandolin accompanied by guitar or ukulele. If above combination is not available, have a soloist sing the song to organ accompaniment, or the organ play alone.*)

PATRIOTISM: Thy growing power and strength did not make thee forgetful of the weakness of others. The time came when thou sawest it was not just that human beings, because they were black and ignorant, should be slaves. So thou didst free them and banished slavery forever from thy borders.

AMERICA (*calling*): The Freedmen!

(*Enter a company of Negroes, shackled. As they bow before* AMERICA, *she removes their shackles, and in gladness they rise and take their places with the other groups. Meantime the choir sings off-stage, "Nobody Knows the Trouble I've Seen."*)

PATRIOTISM: Thou wert one of the first great nations to recognize that women should have equal rights with men in determining the laws and government under which they live. Call those women who gave of their best to win the victory for women suffrage.

AMERICA (*calling*): The Suffragists!

(*As the choir sings the chorus only of "Land of Hope and Glory," there enters a company of women—Susan B. Anthony and others—who curtsy before* AMERICA *and then take their places with the preceding groups.*)

PATRIOTISM: Small were thy beginnings, O America! Through peril, toil, and pain thou hast established thyself among the peoples of the world. Thy strength has grown mightily. See! All these victories thou hast won! And finally to make them secure thou hast conquered the Trade of the World. Call those men who have won for these people a victory over the markets of the nations.

AMERICA (*calling*): Leaders of Trade!

(*As a company of business men of to-day enters, the choir sings the fourth stanza only of "God Send Us Men" (220). They salute* AMERICA *in dignified fashion and take their place with the preceding groups.*)

PATRIOTISM: It is enough! Dost thou not see, O America, why we are proud of thee?

AMERICA: What wouldst thou have me do?

PATRIOTISM: Stand where thou art! Stand firm and fast and strong! Be not tempted away into unknown paths by strange leaders. Preserve what thou hast won. Cherish these children who gather about thee! Long have they worked and struggled to establish thee. Thousands have died that thou mightest live. Live now! Enjoy the victories thou hast won! Heed not those who would create discontent in thy midst! Let them be put down! Thank God that He has brought thee to this day, and pray that He may continue thy prosperity.

AMERICA: Thou pleadest well, O Patriotism. Proud am I of the victories these children of mine have won! Traitor to them would I be if I held lightly their hard-won blessings. Draw closer to me, my children, for ye are my very own—life of my life and blood of my blood.

(*Up to this time the groups introduced by* PATRIOTISM *have been gradually filling up the entire stage. Now they all draw more closely together around* AMERICA *and leave the lower platform free for the groups to be called by* SERVICE. *While this action is taking place, the organ should be playing Yon's "Hymn of Glory," or the last two pages of Dudley Buck's variations on* the *Star-spangled Banner.*)

EPISODE II

UNFINISHED BATTLES

AMERICA: Service, I will hear thee now. But I warn thee that I will have no patience with thee if thou regardest not these victories of the past! What canst thou say to the argument Patriotism hath so nobly pled?

SERVICE: Traitor also would I be if I honored not the victories of the past. And I would God that it were possible for thee to live in peace and plenty enjoying thy prosperity forever. But my sister, Patriotism, remembers not that times change. She sees well the past victories; she sees not the present battles.

AMERICA: Present battles?

SERVICE: Aye. The battles of the uncounted millions within thy borders, O America, who have not yet shared in thy victories, who have not yet won their battles for life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

AMERICA: Uncounted millions? Where are they, whence come they? Why do they not share the blessings our fathers won for all?

SERVICE: Call them for me, as thou hast done for Patriotism, and I will show thee.

AMERICA: Verily I will. And see to it that thou makest good thy words, else hast thou spoken slander upon my fair name.

SERVICE: Call, then, the Immigrants, they who in our own day have given up their homes in far lands and brought all they had to

find in thee, O America, those blessings of life and liberty that Patriotism thinks are vouchsafed to all.

AMERICA (*calling*): The Immigrants!

(*Music to accompany entrance: Hymn, "God Save America" (238), sung by choir. Enter from the left a large company of immigrants, poor, overburdened, and strange, who do not bow to* AMERICA, *but pass in front of her, glancing at her wistfully, and each as he passes raising a hand in a gesture of appeal. Then all take their places in front of the preceding groups. The same procedure should be followed by the later groups whom* SERVICE *will call.*)

AMERICA: How many there are!

SERVICE: Aye. Fourteen millions of them!

AMERICA: Why do they not share equally with these (*indicating the preceding groups*) in the blessings of life and liberty?

SERVICE: Some of them do, but others do not because they come not knowing thy language, thy customs, or thy form of government; they find work in steel mill or slaughter house; their toil is long and hard and poorly paid; they live in a colony with other immigrants; often they are scorned by Americans.

AMERICA: I must see to this. Are there others?

SERVICE: I have only begun. Call the Negroes of this generation.

AMERICA: But I have already called the Negroes. And didst thou not attend when Patriotism showed how they had been freed from slavery?

SERVICE: It was splendid to free them from slavery, but removing their shackles did not assure for them those standards of health and education and Christian living that belong to American citizenship. They have made a gallant fight to attain those standards; many have done so. But there are some twelve million within thy borders now, and if they are to succeed, they need a helping hand from thee.

AMERICA (*calling*): The Negroes!

(*Music to accompany entrance: "Deep River." Violin solo with organ accompaniment; or organ alone. Enter a company of Negroes.*)

SERVICE: Among the mountains of the South live some five and a half million Americans, descendants of the very founders of this nation.

AMERICA: Then what need have they, other than the rest of my children?

SERVICE: The very mountains among which they live have shut most of them away from the rest of the world. They are poor. Many thousands of them can neither read nor write. Many of their children are underfed. They need schools and roads and hospitals. They need teachers to give them light and ministers to lead them to it.

AMERICA (*calling*): The Southern Highlanders!

(*Music to accompany entrance: Verses one and three of hymn, "Lord, While for All Mankind We Pray" (243), sung by choir. Enter a group of Southern Mountaineers.*)

SERVICE: Poor though these be, there are yet poorer under thy flag, O America. For millions of thy citizens who live in the West Indies are struggling not only against disease and ignorance, but against fear and superstition as well, and against immorality and vice. Four hundred years they have been in spiritual bondage. They have been kept in a terrible state of poverty. The Spanish War freed them, and now they are Americans. Wilt thou stand aloof and uncaring while they fight their battles for religious freedom and enlightened citizenship?

AMERICA (*calling*): Latin Americans!

(*Music to accompany entrance: "Perguntale a las Estrellas." Contralto solo with guitar or piano or organ accompaniment. Enter Porto Ricans, Cubans, and Santo Dominicans.*)

SERVICE: Along thy southwestern border, America, live nearly two million Mexicans. Didst thou know that an eighth of Mexico's population now lives on thy soil? In their own country they dwelt in ignorance and in dire poverty. They do not understand thy ways, thy language or thy ideas. Yet, for better or worse they are ambassadors in overalls, for thou shalt be counted friend or enemy of thy sister republic, Mexico, according as these, her people, are treated here.

AMERICA (*calling*): The Spanish-speaking peoples of the Southwest!

(*Music to accompany entrance: "Encantadora Maria." Baritone or contralto solo with guitar, piano or organ accompaniment. Enter a company of Mexicans, carrying picks and shovels.*)

SERVICE: In the great Northwest, O America, are thousands of men at work in lumber camps and mining camps. They have no homes and their friends are few. Drink and the devil have done for many of them. Others are fighting an uphill fight against unusual temptations. They are thy sons, America. Is their need nothing to thee?

AMERICA (*calling*): The Lumberjacks!

(*Music to accompany entrance: Verses one and two of hymn, "Lord, While for All Mankind We Pray" (243), sung by choir. Enter a company of Lumberjacks with axes.*)

SERVICE: Far to the north is Alaska. Patriotism has told thee of the wealth that vast empire has added to thy strength, but she did not tell thee of the human beings who live in the far north of that territory or of their need. A brave people they are, but they are fighting their battles not only against cold and desolation, but against the greed of the white man and his wickedness. The gold-seekers left a trail of disease and vice behind them, a trail that is a stain on thy fair flag. Wilt thou develop the material resources of this land and neglect its human resources?

AMERICA (*calling*): The natives of Alaska!

(*Music to accompany entrance: First verse only of "Dear Land of My Fathers," sung by choir. Enter company of Alaskans.*)

SERVICE: The Indians are still with us—almost as many to-day as there ever were before. Patriotism with all her pride cannot boast of our ancestors' treatment of these first Americans. The white man sold the Indian fire-water, took away his land, and then crowded him upon reservations. His physical vigor is gone now. He is struggling to make himself over, but there are few who understand him and fewer still to lead him in ways of prosperity and peace. Art thou content with thy record with the Indian?

AMERICA (*calling*): The Indians!

(*Music to accompany entrance: "From an Indian Lodge." Enter a small company of Indians.*)

SERVICE: And finally, O America, I speak for the twenty-seven millions of thy children who are growing up in spiritual illiteracy.

AMERICA: What? Surely thou art mistaken, Service. There cannot be so many who are deprived of the teachings of religion!

SERVICE: Twenty-seven million children who are not within the doors of any Sunday-school! Forty-two million young people connected with no church! What can a nation do to teach others if it cannot teach its own children?

AMERICA (*calling*): The Children!

(*Music to accompany entrance: Hymn, "Hark to the Sound" (247). Children sing, aided by choir off-stage. Enter a company of small children.*)

SERVICE: See, America! Patriotism would have thee stand still and glory in thy past. But thou wouldst not be true to that past or to the founders who gave thee birth if thou shouldst now draw thy cloak around thee and turn thy face away from these thy needy children. Even if thou wouldst, thou couldst not, for these children are growing in numbers and growing in proportion. For better or worse they are shaping the America of

To-morrow. Their battles are thy battles; their victories shall be thy victories! For freedom, for education, for health, for fellowship they fight. Ignorance, disease, race prejudice, poverty, and fear are their enemies. Tell me, O America, shall they cry to thee in vain?

(*Chorus of all the groups introduced by* SERVICE—*extending arms upward to* AMERICA):

CHORUS: Help us, O America, help us!

AMERICA (*rising*): I *will* help! Thou art right, O Service! Never shall it be said that my needy cried unto me and I heard them not! I did not know mine own people. But now I know and my heart is filled to overflowing. My past, O Patriotism, I will not forget, but if Americans of to-day are to be worthy sons of worthy sires they must not stop to glory in the victories of yesterday. They must fight the battles of to-day. And they must win.

PATRIOTISM: My eyes, too, have been opened, O America, and I repent my vain boasting. I have been a false Patriotism, false to myself and false to thee. For I have seen only past victories and been blind to battles. Now I understand. Apart from the children of to-day the heroes of yesterday cannot be made perfect. For the victories of the father must be made sure by their sons. I, too, will follow Service.

AMERICA: Hail then, Americans of to-day! I call for volunteers to fight my unfinished battles, so that all who live beneath my flag may in surety have those blessings of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness for which, under God, this nation was founded. These battles will not be easy ones. They will be as hard as the battles of yesterday. For they must be fought, not with swords and guns, but with the weapons of the spirit—love and knowledge and patience and understanding.

SERVICE: O America, I am happy! I knew that when thine eyes were opened, thine heart would respond. I pray thee, let me call thy volunteers!

AMERICA: So be it.

SERVICE: Come, Patriotism, thou shalt stand by my side and welcome them.

(SERVICE *and* PATRIOTISM *leave their stations and come forward to the front and center of the stage, one on either side of the stairs.*)

EPISODE III

THE CALL FOR VOLUNTEERS

SERVICE: Come, Doctors and Nurses! Builders of the Public Health! We all need thee. But the poor do not have thee. Mothers languish and children die. O come before it is too late!

DOCTORS AND NURSES (*as they advance quickly from the rear of the church down the center aisle to the steps of the platform*): Coming! Coming! Coming! (*They ascend the steps and are greeted by* SERVICE *and* PATRIOTISM.)

SERVICE: And what hast thou brought to serve this people?

LEADER OF THE DOCTORS AND NURSES GROUP: We have brought the red bond of life itself, and with it new hope and happiness for all this nation.

(*Gives to* SERVICE *a large spool of red ribbon.*)

SERVICE: Go, then, and entwine thy life and hope and happiness around this people that they may have the vigor and the will to fight the battles of to-day.

(*The doctors and nurses, leaving one end of their ribbon in the hands of* SERVICE, *encircle the entire company upon the stage with it, bringing the other end around to* PATRIOTISM. *The only opening is thus at the center and in front, between* SERVICE *and* PATRIOTISM. *As they are about this work* PATRIOTISM *speaks.*)

PATRIOTISM: O Service, let me call the Schools, for they are peculiarly my own. (SERVICE *bows ascent.*) Schools of America! Come! Bring us knowledge. Come and show us how to use

our freedom in ways of service. Come and teach our minds and our hands how to do the will of our hearts!

SCHOOL TEACHERS (*as they advance from the rear of the church down the aisle to the steps of the platform*): Coming! Coming! Coming! (*They ascend the steps and are greeted by* SERVICE *and* PATRIOTISM.)

PATRIOTISM: And art thou ready to do thy part in binding this nation together?

LEADER OF THE SCHOOL GROUP: We are ready. We will bind them with this cord of knowledge, that they may learn how to live and work together in peace and prosperity.

(*Gives to* PATRIOTISM *a large spool of blue ribbon.*)

PATRIOTISM: Thou hast done well. Take this cord and see that wherever life and health have gone this cord of knowledge may give them power.

(*The School Group entwine their blue ribbon with the red one already encircling the entire group, leaving one end with* PATRIOTISM *and bringing the other around to* SERVICE. *This group then mingles with the others.*)

SERVICE: Our greatest need is spiritual and so I call the Churches. Do they come?

CHURCH WORKERS (*advancing from the rear of the church down the center aisle to the steps of the platform*): Coming! Coming! Coming! (*They ascend the steps and are greeted by handclasps from* PATRIOTISM *and* SERVICE.)

SERVICE: Thou hast heard the need of this nation. Tell me, hast thou brought with thee any power by which these people may be bound together in sympathy and understanding?

LEADER OF THE CHURCH GROUP (*handing to* SERVICE *one end of a large spool of white ribbon*): We have brought a cord of love and faith to bind heart to heart and spirit to spirit.

SERVICE: It is good! Go then, see that thy cord is entwined with

life and knowledge. And do not stop with binding hearts. See that hand meets hand in Christian fellowship.

(*The organist plays softly "Materna" while the Church Group, leaving one end of their white ribbon in the hand of* SERVICE, *entwine the rest with the red and blue ribbons already encircling the entire company. They then mingle among the various groups upon the stage, mixing them up and making them clasp hands. The doctors, nurses, and teachers help in this work.* AMERICA *now comes forward, her trumpeters making an aisle for her, to the opening between* SERVICE *and* PATRIOTISM. *As they join hands, the circle is complete.*)

EPISODE IV

AMERICA THE BEAUTIFUL—A VISION OF THE FUTURE

PATRIOTISM (*recites*):

O beautiful for spacious skies,
For amber waves of grain,
For purple mountain majesties
Above the fruited plain!
America! America!
God shed his grace on thee,
And crown thy good with brotherhood
From sea to shining sea!

SERVICE (*recites*):

O beautiful for pilgrim feet,
Whose stern, impassioned stress
A thoroughfare for freedom beat
Across the wilderness!
America! America!
God mend thine every flaw,
Confirm thy soul in self-control,
Thy liberty in law!

AMERICA (*recites*):

O beautiful for patriot dream
That sees beyond the years
Thine alabaster cities gleam,
Undimmed by human tears!
America! America!
God shed his grace on thee,
And crown thy good with brotherhood,
From sea to shining sea!

—Katherine Lee Bates.

(*The organ now plays the hymn-tune "Materna." The audience rises and, led by the choir, sings to this tune as the recessional, the stanzas just recited from "America the Beautiful" (Hymn: "O Beautiful for Spacious Skies," 239). The ribbons will need to be cut in the middle by one of the attendants near* AMERICA'S *chair before the recessional begins. First to leave the platform are the trumpeters, who dispose themselves as follows: one at the right of the steps at the foot of the center of the platform, a second opposite him on the left of the steps, a third at the rear of the church and at the right end of the center aisle, the fourth opposite him on the left end of the aisle. The Trumpeters hold the red, white, and blue ribbons as an aisle through which march first* AMERICA, *then* SERVICE *and* PATRIOTISM, *and then, two by two, all those who were upon the stage—all singing as they march. Last to leave the room are the trumpeters with their ribbons.*)

(*The organist plays a postlude while the audience departs.*)

MANUALS, REFERENCE BOOKS, AND COLLECTIONS OF RELIGIOUS DRAMAS

Drama in Education, by Grace Sloan Overton, Century Co., 1926, 289 pp. $2.50.

How to Produce Amateur Plays, by Barrett H. Clark, Little, Brown & Co., 1925, 177 pp. $2.00.

Technique in Dramatic Art, by Halliam Bosworth, Macmillan Co., 1926, 438 pp. $2.60.

The Technique of Pageantry, by Linwood Taft, A. S. Barnes Co., 1921, 168 pp. $2.00.

The Art of Producing Pageants, by Esther W. Bates, Walter H. Baker and Co., 1925, 269 pp. $1.75.

Costuming a Play, by Grimball and Wells, Century Co., 1925, 133 pp. $3.00.

A List of Music for Plays and Pageants, by Roland Holt, Appleton and Co., 1925, 92 pp. $1.00.

Dramatization of Bible Stories, by Elizabeth Miller, University of Chicago Press, 1918, 1924, 162 pp. $1.25.

Bible Dramatics, by J. W. Raine, Century Co., 1927, 372 pp. $2.00.

Bible Study Through Educational Dramatics, by Helen L. Willcox, Abingdon Press, 1924, 155 pp. $1.00.

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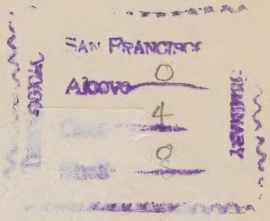
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